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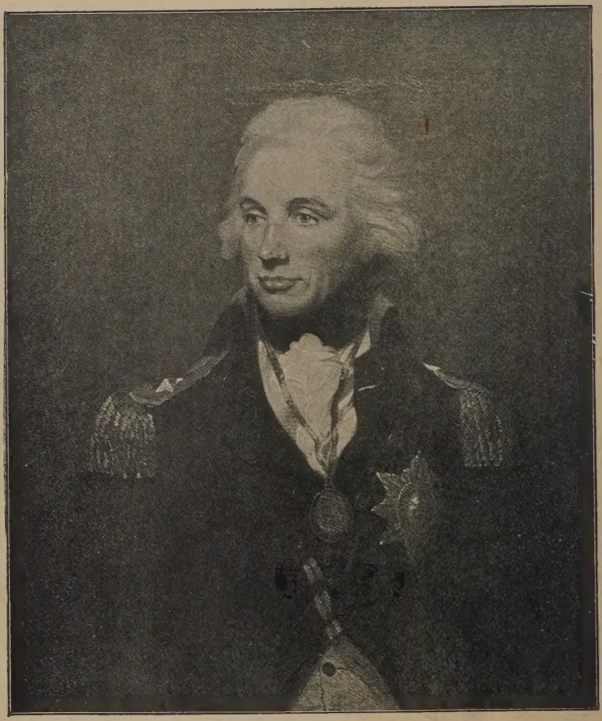

NELSON

After a painting by L. F. ABBOTT *in the National Portrait Gallery*

Frontispiece (*see page* 1)

NELSON

AND HIS CAPTAINS:

SKETCHES OF FAMOUS SEAMEN

BY

W. H. FITCHETT, B.A., LL.D.

WITH PORTRAITS AND A FACSIMILE LETTER

41171

SECOND IMPRESSION

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NELSON AND HIS CAPTAINS

CHAPTER I

NELSON: A CHARACTER STUDY

"Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,
The greatest sailor since the world began!"

—TENNYSON.

NELSON is the only figure amongst the great sea-captains of the Napoleonic war of which the human memory keeps any vivid image. The iron face of Jervis looks out on us for a moment from the smoke of St. Vincent, gloomy, stern, and cynical, and then vanishes! Collingwood, who led down on the Franco-Spanish line at Trafalgar in a fashion so stately, and in advance even of Nelson, and who lies in the great crypt of St. Paul's beside his famous chief, is, for the general reader, little more than a name. Cornwallis, the hero of the tireless and memorable blockade of Brest, is scarcely even a name. Who remembers aught of Barham, the white-haired veteran—sea-dog, as well as sea-lord—who devised, almost off-hand, the counter-stroke that shattered Napoleon's sea strategy and made Trafalgar possible?

Cochrane, no doubt, is remembered after a fashion; but it is as a sort of marine Don Quixote; and he owes his fame almost as much to his long-enduring and loudly proclaimed wrongs as to his marvellous exploits. Sidney Smith flits as a sort of sea-ghost through the cells of human recollection, but it is for what he did—not on sea, but—on land. He is remembered, not as a sailor, but as the defender of Acre.

Nelson is the one sea-captain of the Great War who has stamped his image imperishably on the imagination of the English-speaking race.

Whether, indeed, Nelson was in a technical sense "the greatest sailor since the world began," need not be discussed. In the art of taking care of ship and canvas in rough weather some of his own captains probably surpassed him. In the genius that wielded fleets he was supreme! And in the great drama of Napoleonic wars there are —for the man in the street—only three supreme names, that of Napoleon himself, of Wellington, and of Nelson, and Nelson was as great on sea as his two rivals in fame were great on land.

This work is an account, not so much of Nelson as of his captains—the men of the Nile and of Trafalgar. "They," said Nelson, of a group of his captains, "are my children; they serve in my school, and I glory in them." And we cannot understand the "school" without some clear

mental image of the master who stamped his impress so deeply on it.

. . . . . .

Nelson's figure when set against a background of mighty battles, seems unheroic in an almost absurd degree. Haliburton makes his Sam Slick describe Nelson as "that cripple-gaited, one-eyed, one-armed little naval critter." In these days when the foot-rule and the stethoscope and the examination paper are the tests by which our embryo Nelsons and Wellingtons are chosen, the future hero of the Nile and of Trafalgar would infallibly have been rejected. The test of the foot-rule alone would have been fatal. Nelson was mean in stature. "A little man with no dignity and a shock-head," is the description by a lady who saw Nelson—no doubt with unfriendly eyes—after the Nile. "The merest boy of a captain I have ever beheld," says Prince William Henry of him when he met him in New York in 1782, when Nelson was twenty-four years old, and already in command of a frigate. "A little man, and far from handsome," is Sir William Hamilton's description when Nelson made his appearance in Naples in 1793. Nelson at that date was, no doubt, curiously fragile in appearance, and with the empty sleeve which Santa Cruz gave him, and the half-blindness he owed to Corsica. His face, even in after years, when bronzed with the sea

winds and scarred with battle, was hardly—with its pouting lips, half-melancholy, half-boyish eyes, and careless hair—the face of a war leader. Only rarely, indeed, amongst his many portraits and busts do we catch a gleam of the expression his sailors must have seen on Nelson's face when the guns were beginning to speak. Thaller's bust of Nelson, with its masterful profile, its eager fighting look, and the deep line from the base of the nostril to the chin, gives, it is true, a curious impression of power. Even more in Flaxman's fine bust the resolved line of the lips, the challenging eyes, give us a hint of what may be called Nelson's battle face.

But in most of his portraits the sensitive mouth, the curving lips, the set of his eyebrows, all tell of the emotional side of Nelson's character. He was vehement, moody, swinging to opposite poles of emotion with strange readiness; now drooping, now exultant, and intense alike in his hates and his loves. There was a strain of the woman in him; of womanly vehemence, of womanly sensitiveness, of womanly—not to say half-shrewish—temper. It was the woman in him which explains that pathetic "Kiss me, Hardy," in the last scene of all. His hate of the French has in it a strain of feminine shrewishness. His belief in his friends, in his comrades, in his ship, had in it more than a touch of feminine exaggeration. The half-

feminine side of Nelson's character is seen in his simple and unashamed delight in flattery. Lady Hamilton's emotions and superlatives, her tears, her apostrophes, her swoons would have turned the stomach of most men.

It is said sometimes that Nelson had no sense of humour; and that is not quite true. There was humour, though of a somewhat grim sort, in his description of himself in Corsica: "I have all the diseases there are," he wrote, "but there is not enough in my frame for them to fasten on." There was humour again in his letter to the Duke of Clarence, explaining the loss of his arm at Santa Cruz: "I assure your Royal Highness," he says, "that not a scrap of that ardour with which I served our King has been shot away"! Was there not humour, again—of what may be called the iron sort — in the incident at Copenhagen, when Nelson lifted his telescope to his blind eye, and declared he really could *not* see his admiral's ignoble signal of recall? But it needed, perhaps, the thunder of a great battle to kindle Nelson's sense of the humorous. Under ordinary conditions it emerged too seldom and too scantily. A pinch of the genuine salt of humour would certainly have made vain the flatteries and the fascinations of that somewhat *passée* and decidedly over-plump charmer, Lady Hamilton.

But his moods came and went with bewildering

rapidity. Nothing can well be more tragical than Nelson's gloom when the dark hour is upon him. Thus, after his failure at Santa Cruz, he writes to Jervis: "I am become a burden to my friends, and useless to my country." His career was ended! On the other hand, nothing could be gayer or more audacious than Nelson's self-confidence during his moments of exaltation. He was still an almost unknown post-captain when he wrote to his wife: "One day or other I will have a long Gazette to myself. I cannot, if I am in the field of glory, be kept out of sight. . . . Not a kingdom or state where my name will be forgotten." There was a touch of unreasoning extravagance in his occasional outbursts of discontent at the supposed slowness of his promotion. It is customary to say that Nelson, the sixth child—one out of the eleven children—of a country parson, had no official influence to help him in his career. But his uncle, Suckling, was Comptroller of the Navy, and Nelson, by some charm of manner, as well as by his fine gifts, won one powerful patron after another, from Parker to Jervis. The mere dates of his commissions show how swiftly he rose. He was only twelve when, without the formality of an examination, he became a midshipman. At fourteen he was captain's coxswain in the *Carcass*, and on his way to the North Pole. When nineteen years old he was second lieutenant of the *Lowestoft*, and in command of her

tender, a schooner named the *Little Lucy*. At twenty he flew his flag in command of the *Badger*, a brig; he was only twenty-one when put in command of the *Hinchinbroke*, a small frigate, and scarcely twenty-two when, as senior naval officer, he led in the San Juan expedition. His service was broken by much sickness; yet, in August 1781, he was in command of the *Albemarle*, a 28-gun frigate.

There, it is true, came a gap of wasted time. Nelson went on half-pay, and occupied himself in falling in, and out of, love, and with trying in vain to learn French; but in 1784 he was in command of the *Boreas*, and was senior captain in the West Indies. Then followed more than four years of married life, half-pay and general unrest and grumbling. Nelson was on half-pay from December 1787 to January 1793—five long, wasted, fretful, unhappy years, when he contemplated giving up the sea altogether. But in January 1793, when yet not thirty-five years old, he walked, as its captain, the quarterdeck of the *Agamemnon*, "without exception," as Nelson himself wrote, "the finest 64 in the service." Nelson, by the way, had as many fond illusions about his ships as a youth for the first time in love has about his mistress. The same year he was commodore under Hood, and in command of the naval forces in the siege of Calvi. In August 1796 he hoisted his broad

pennant as commodore of a squadron of frigates. At Cape St. Vincent, where he won imperishable fame, he was only thirty-nine. He fought the battle of the Nile when he was not yet forty.

The mere chronology of Nelson's career thus proves that he suffered from no official neglect. The sense of discontent which burned in his blood, and so often stains his correspondence, was due, in part, to the hypersensitive, not to say feminine, side of his nature. In part, again, it may be traced to that almost constant experience of ill-health he was doomed to suffer. Through some of the most crowded years of his career, Nelson was little better than a semi-invalid. He had a frail constitution to begin with. "What has poor little Horatio done, who is so weak," asked Suckling, his uncle, when asked to take Nelson as midshipman, "that, above all the rest, he should be sent to rough it at sea?" And a body frail by original make was inhabited by a restless, fiery, and vehement spirit, all too strong for its fragile case. Goethe's description of Hamlet, "an oak tree planted in a vase," might be applied to Nelson. During his early years his slender body and pain-sharpened face made every kind-hearted woman who came in contact with him eager to nurse him. Mrs. Locker, the wife of his first captain after Suckling, was his nurse; so was Lady Parker, the wife of his admiral; so was Lady Hughes in turn. His tireless energy, with its re-

upses when the fierce stress for a moment was over, tore his frail body almost to pieces. He could take care of everybody's health but his own. He might have been a pillule-absorbing hypochondriac but for the fiery indomitable spirit that burned within his dyspeptic and overstrained body, and forbade the shaken nerves to yield, and the tired muscles to rest.

Nelson was driven back from the East by sickness while yet a lieutenant. He brought the seeds of a deadly fever with him in his blood from the San Juan expedition. His health broke down again after a period of service in the West Indies. He knew months of pain and completest weakness after his wound at Santa Cruz. He fretted himself into a fever in his great sea chase after Brueys, and believed himself to be in serious peril of dying from a broken heart. His health failed again after the Nile. "I never expect," he wrote to Jervis, "to see your face again." He drooped like a chronic and hopeless invalid in the sunshine of Naples, and when breathing the atmosphere of Lady Hamilton's adoration. He was threatened with blindness; he was "worn out and left-handed," as he described himself. "I am almost finished," he wrote to Admiral Goodall. The cold and exposure of the Copenhagen operations were all but fatal to him. When on Channel service off Boulogne he was racked with a perpetual cough, driven almost mad

with toothache, and—most ignoble distress of all—was perpetually seasick! His cough-shaken, pain-racked body, when he kept guard during the stormy months of 1803 off Toulon, moved the perpetual wonder and pity of his own officers. He was rheumatic, he had incessant pains of the heart, he was tormented with "the constant sense of the blood gushing up the left side of my head." "Dreadfully seasick," he wrote; "always tossed about, and always seasick." And this was the year before Trafalgar! "Nothing," he wrote to Lady Hamilton, "can be more miserable and unhappy than your poor Nelson. My heart is almost broken."

And yet the keen, clear, heroic spirit burnt like a flame within the shattered, fragile, pain-tormented body. Macaulay describing the rival leaders who confronted each other at Neerwinden in 1693, says that, "amongst the 120,000 soldiers who were marshalled round Neerwinden under all the standards of Western Europe, the two feeblest in body were the hunchbacked dwarf who urged forward the fiery onset of France, and the asthmatic skeleton who covered the slow retreat of England." And, as far as physical appearance is concerned, Nelson would have been a good companion figure to either Luxemburg or William III. It is difficult indeed to recall any other great figure in history who carried such a burden of physical disabilities as did

elson, and grumbled over them so loudly, yet umphed over them so completely.

And it moves one's wonder still to remember at this fragile, undersized, half-womanly figure, not "the greatest sailor since the world began," as the greatest sea-warrior the world has ever en. He was even more—he was almost, if not uite, the most terrible fighter, whether on sea or nd, war has known. Admiral Colomb dwells with ondering emphasis on "that tremendous desire r personal distinction, that delight in confronting nger, that awful singleness of destructive purpose" hich built Nelson's monument in English history.

Courage is of many sorts, from the hot-blooded mper that danger exhilarates, to what is some- mes called "two o'clock in the morning" courage— e cool, unshrinking valour, which is independent all physical conditions, and which Wellington eld to be the rarest kind of courage. Nelson, it ay be claimed, had both kinds of courage, and ad each in perfect measure.

Battle intoxicated him, and yet left him cool. was like a fierce wine poured into his blood; ut it steadied while it exalted every sense. There something humorous in the pity he expends on roubridge when the *Culloden* went ashore at the ile, and its unfortunate captain was compelled to atch his comrades, to use Nelson's phrase, "in the ull tide of happiness," smashing up the French

fleet, while he himself could take no part in the peril and glory of that process. To be in the passion and perils of a great battle was, for Nelson, to be "in the full tide of happiness." At Copenhagen, when the Danish bullets were covering the quarterdeck of the *Elephant* with splinters, Nelson turned to Colonel Stewart, with the remark, "This is warm work, and this day may be the last to any of us at any moment.' Then he added, with emphasis, "But, mark you, I would not be elsewhere for thousands." Collingwood knew his admiral well, and, as the *Royal Sovereign* led into the tempest of fire at Trafalgar, he said to his captain, "Rotherham, what would Nelson give to be here." Nelson, on his part, gazing at the far-stretched and menacing line of Villeneuve, was just then saying to Hardy, "What would poor Sir Robert Calder give to be with us now."

Perhaps the most perilous hour in Nelson's stormy life was that of the boat combat by night in the Bay of Cadiz. He himself described it as "the greatest peril he had ever known." His boat, with twelve officers and men, stumbled, in the blackness, on a Spanish gunboat with a crew of thirty officers and men. How desperate was the fighting which followed may be judged from the circumstance that of the Spaniards eighteen were killed and *all* the rest wounded. Nelson's own life, in the furious hand-to-hand struggle, was twice

ed by the devotion of his coxswain, Sykes. And , in all Nelson's references to that incident, it plain he regarded it as one of the most ecstatic- delightful moments of his whole career.

Nelson's fighting qualities—the speed of his ke, the swiftness of his onfall, his audacious ing, and the bloodhound-like tenacity of his rit—are perhaps most strikingly illustrated in two signal failures of his career—the San Juan edition, and the attack on the treasure ships at ita Cruz.

Nelson, when he commanded the naval detach- nt in the San Juan business, was only a lad twenty-one. The climate was deadly, the rain essant, the country almost impassable. It took enteen days of desperate toil to force the boats the *Hinchinbroke* up stream till the fort of San an was reached.

Nelson was for leaping, without a moment's lay, on the fort, and that instinct was as wise it was daring. But the soldiers were pedants. ey insisted on beginning their approaches with lious formality. Nelson found his advice re- ted, yet he toiled in the trenches and batteries th furious energy, while men died fast on all les with sickness, and out of his 200 sailors, 5 were dead. Nelson, too, would probably have d but that his fiery spirit gave him no time be sick. He was 'the first in every service,

whether by day or night," wrote the very soldier who had rejected his advice for an instant attack. "There was not a gun fired but was pointed by him or by the chief engineer." Nelson brought a shattered frame and fever-poisoned blood back from San Juan, but he had given a proof of supreme fighting qualities.

In the blackness of the failure at Santa Cruz, again, Nelson's figure as a leader of men stands out in lines at once luminous and noble. He was forbidden by his orders to land in person; and to that circumstance is, perhaps, due the failure of the whole expedition. Troubridge commanded the first party that landed, and hesitated to attack the heights which overlooked the town, where Nelson certainly would not have hesitated for an instant. But Troubridge's failure, according to Nelson's keen sense of honour and duty, created a new obligation for him. He must attack again, "for the honour of our kingdom and country . . . and that our enemies may be convinced there is nothing an Englishman is not equal to." And Nelson decided he must command in person. "I felt the second attack," he wrote, "a forlorn hope; I never expected to return." But, as Nelson read his duty, the obligation to attack was peremptory.

So, in the blackness of the night, he led his tiny squadron of boats, carrying 1000 seamen, and swung hither and thither by the vast seas, in an

ttack on an unknown and rocky shore, hedged vith a roaring surf, guarded by great batteries nanned by not less than 8000 Spaniards. The nole and the shore gleamed with hostile fires, and vere swept with bullets as the boats struggled up. The *Fox*, a cutter carrying 180 men, was sunk by a single shot. Nelson, in the act of landing, had his right arm shattered, and fell with the blood pouring from the torn artery. The arm was tightly bound, and the boat, with Nelson lying in t half unconscious, was slowly pulled back to the ship.

Nelson rallied, however, at the sight of the perishing crew of the *Fox*, and, with his single unnjured arm, helped to save many of the drowning men. His boat carries him to the side—not of his flagship, but—of the *Sea Horse*, whose captain, Fremantle, is ashore fighting. Nelson, though this ship offered him what, at the risk of his life, he needed—instant surgical help—refuses to go on board. He is told his life is in deadly peril; "then I will die," he says, "rather than alarm Mrs. Fremantle by her seeing me in this state when I can give her no tidings of her husband."

He has come back from defeat. His men are dying on that black shore, where the guns are still roaring; he himself is suffering anguish from a deadly wound, and the worse anguish of failure.

Yet he remembers a wife's fears, and refuses, even for the sake of securing help for his own wound, to arouse them.

When he reached the *Theseus*, his flagship, he refused help in mounting the ship's side. "I have got my legs left," he said, "and one arm;" and, with his right arm swinging loose and bloody, he clambered, holding by one hand, up the black side of the *Theseus*, and called for the surgeon, as he stepped on the deck, to bring his instruments. "I know I must lose my right arm, and the sooner the better." He suffered amputation without a word, and within a few hours he was writing a letter with the unaccustomed fingers of his left hand to tell Jervis the story of the failure. As a picture of daring, of generous feeling, and of the triumph of an heroic spirit over pain and weakness and defeat, war does not offer many pictures nobler than that of Nelson on the night of the "failure" at Santa Cruz.

But if Nelson had the courage which finds in peril itself an intoxication, he had the cooler and finer courage that gives a new clearness to the eye, and a new energy to the will, as the peril increases. This indeed is the paradox of Nelson's character as a battle leader. Before the moment of action he frets, he doubts, he desponds. But the instant of action finds him cool, easy, confident, almost gay. He is all fire before the fight, but ice—and

dynamite in it. The fret and intensity of his eagerness before a great battle sometimes clouded his judgment. This, it is sometimes contended, explains why he overran Brueys in the great sea-chase of 1798, and why he left Alexandria before his enemy had arrived. He was too eager. He had weighed every possible chance in that sea-chase — except the chance that he might overrun his prey; which was exactly what happened. Had he been as cool when he sighted the two French frigates off Malta on June 22, as he was on the evening of August 1, when he was laying his ship alongside the *Spartiate*, he would certainly have secured the opportunity — for which he longed, and which would have changed the current of history — of "trying Bonaparte on a wind." The fever and eagerness of the chase, the passion to overtake his foe, which burned like white flame in his blood, clouded his judgment, and well-nigh broke his heart. Nelson was almost without sleep or food during the chase; but the moment the *Zealous* signalled that the enemy was lying in Aboukir Bay, Nelson went to dinner! He could eat now.

The perilous edge of battle, in a word, where human anxiety is apt to grow acute, was, for Nelson, the point where his anxieties ended. All his agitations suddenly crystallised into a single purpose translucent as a diamond, and as hard. He doubts himself before the guns begin to speak; but at the first shot doubt falls from him like a garment.

It was this combination of unlike types of courage which made Nelson one of the most terrible fighters of all history. He could follow his enemy with the fierce and tireless energy of some bloodhound round the world, as he pursued Brueys or Villeneuve; and could then run in on his foe, at sight, with silent and deadly purpose, as he closed on the French line in Aboukir Bay when the sun was setting.

Nelson, of course, fought with brains as well as with broadsides. Admiral Colomb, a quite competent judge, says that Nelson in action with an opposing fleet, "stands more nearly as a specially inspired being than any great man of modern times." He certainly brought to his business as a fighter, and in a supreme degree, the mystic, undefinable, yet magical gift we call genius. He saw with luminous vision exactly the problem before him; assessed the weight of every factor with perfect exactness; shaped in his swift brain a compact and flawless strategy, and then drove to his chosen goal with unswerving purpose. "In the presence of the enemy—in Hotham's action, at St. Vincent, at the Nile, at Copenhagen, and Trafalgar—it is quite impossible," says Admiral Colomb, "to conceive of more perfect tactical knowledge, applied in more perfect style, with greater decision of purpose, or more sustained determination" than in the case of Nelson.

There was, in a word, method, calculation, knowledge, behind Nelson's most audacious feats. When he boarded and carried the two Spanish three-deckers at St. Vincent he was only acting on that opinion of the Spaniards which he had formed when he studied the Spanish fleet at Cadiz in 1793. "I am certain," he then wrote, "if our six barges' crews, who are picked men, had got on board one of their first-rates, they would have taken her. The Dons may make fine ships; they cannot make men." It was with less than "the crews of six barges" that Nelson, at St. Vincent, clambered up the lofty hulls of the *San Nicolas*, and the *San Josef*, in succession, and captured them both.

And yet, curiously enough, while nothing could be simpler than Nelson's plan at the Nile, or more faultless than its execution, critics of a certain school would have us believe that nobody has ever been able to comprehend that strategy, or to express it in accurate terms! James is hopelessly wrong. Ekins is a fellow-offender of equally desperate quality. Mahan is only a little less wrong than James. Even Nelson's captains, though they carried out Nelson's strategy, did not, we are assured, understand it. Speaking of the Nile, Admiral Colomb says, "Even his own flag-captain, the most gallant Berry, did not know how the battle had been fought, nor why Nelson fought it in that particular way." Just in the same fashion,

we are told, Collingwood did not understand Trafalgar!

But is Nelson's strategy, after all, of so cryptic a quality that even the experts can neither comprehend it nor explain it? The truth is, Nelson's "strategy" was merely perfect, common sense applied to the business of war. His aim, like that of Napoleon, was always to be superior in numbers and strength at the point of attack. "I have always believed," said Nelson, "that one Englishman is equal to three Frenchmen;" and, personally, he was cheerfully willing, with his single ship, to meet those odds. "Take you a Frenchman apiece," he said to his captains, when in pursuit of Villeneuve, "and leave me the Spaniards." But in his great sea-fights his plan was always, if possible, to throw three English ships upon one French ship!

Thus, at the Nile, he found his enemy lying anchored in a long-drawn line, head to wind. Nelson's leading ships crossed the head of the line and engaged the Frenchmen to larboard; the later British ships anchored on the outside of the same ships, which were thus crushed by an overwhelming cross fire. Thirteen British ships, including the *Leander*, that is, were concentrated on seven French ships, the French tail practically taking no part in the fight. "By attacking the enemy's van and centre," says Nelson, in one luminous and oft-quoted sentence, "the wind blowing directly along their

line, I was enabled to throw what force I pleased on a few ships." The plan was the perfection of simplicity and of intelligibility.

The plan at Copenhagen was practically that of the Nile, modified by local conditions, and was only spoiled because the leading British ships went ashore. Nelson's strategy at Trafalgar, again, was, in principle, that of the Nile, only adjusted to the fact that both fleets were in motion. The usual descriptions of Trafalgar are made obscure to the general reader by the use of technical terms, but it was really as simple as it was audacious.

Collingwood, at the head of one column, pierced the enemy's line about the twelfth ship from the rear; Nelson, leading the other column, pierced it about the tenth ship from the van. Thus the centre of Villeneuve's line was crushed betwixt the two British columns, while its van and centre were left dismembered, and for the most part out of the fight.

Nelson thus revolutionised naval warfare, yet it cannot be claimed that he created new tactics, or added any startling discovery to the grammar of battle. But for generations the British navy had been afflicted with a mistaken tactical system, crystallised into law, and made mandatory. It was the system of weak men, and suited weak men; but it was hedged round with terrible penalties. Disobedience to it in 1744 cost Matthews his flag, and twelve years later cost

Byng his life. The official Fighting Instructions of the Admiralty directed an admiral, when engaging an enemy's fleet, to arrange his line exactly parallel with the enemy's line, and to pit ship against ship, so that a sea battle resolved itself into so many sea duels. The essential idea was to distribute the attacking force along the whole of the enemy's line, not to combine it in overwhelming preponderance against a portion of that line. Nelson inverted that process. The essential principle of all his battles was to double on part of his enemy's line and crush it, leaving the surviving fragment to be destroyed in detail. All the traditions of the navy were against these tactics, and, it may be added, the natural pride of the British seaman was against them. One Englishman was equal to two Frenchmen; why invert these odds, and expend two Englishmen on one Frenchman? This was, in substance, the criticism of Saumarez on Nelson's tactics at the Nile. "It never required," he argued "two English ships to capture one French." Why should not every captain have his own antagonist and fight him on equal terms?

But Nelson fought with brains as well as with cannon shot and cutlass. He knew that in advance, and before a shot was fired, a battle was lost or won in the cells of a general's brain. And the terrible quality of his fighting was found in the deadly skill with which he threw his whole force

on part only of his enemy's force, and thus satisfied the first condition of victory, that of being overwhelmingly superior in strength at the point of attack.

All this, it may be said again, was but common sense applied to the tremendous issues of a sea-battle; but it was decisive, and it ensured decisive results. Nelson did not invent this principle; it belongs, in a sense, to the alphabet of tactics. But it had not only been forgotten in the British navy—it had been officially forbidden by the Fighting Instructions of the Admiralty. It is true that Hawke and Rodney, and Hood, and even Howe, had broken loose more or less from these absurd instructions, and were, in a sense, the forerunners of Nelson; but Nelson applied the new principle to naval warfare on a scale, and with a certainty and swiftness, that made his battles like thunderbolts, and as destructive as thunderbolts.

Although it was the constant aim of Nelson's strategy to throw at least two of his own ships on every ship of the enemy, yet, when the need arose, he could see those odds inverted against himself with serenest courage. What can be finer, and what more daring, than his own action at Cape St. Vincent, when, without orders, he suddenly swung out of the line, swept in a curve round the British ship in his rear, and met, single-handed, the great flock of Spanish three-deckers—the vast *Santissima*

Trinidada, looming like a giant amongst them—coming down before the wind, with bellying sails and foam rising high under their bluff bows! Nelson, in the *Captain*, endured for a time the fire of five Spanish first-rates, and when his ship lay, with splintered masts, torn rigging, and decks covered with the wounded and the dead, unable to tack or steer, Nelson, with matchless audacity, proceeded to board and carry two hostile three-deckers in succession! It was a flash of warlike genius that made him suddenly break loose from the British line and throw himself in the path of the Spaniards. It illustrated his unquenchable fighting ardour that, when he had gained his tactical end, and his own ship was little better than a wreck, he could yet clamber up the huge sides of the Spanish first-rates in turn, and carry them with the cutlass.

Nelson's fighting plans, it may be added, always had about them a singular and terrible thoroughness. The battle, so far as he can control it, never ends while one hostile flag still flutters aloft. Hotham fought his battle on March 12, 1795, in a sufficiently gallant manner. His force was inferior, but two of the enemy's ships struck. The French were in retreat, and Nelson was on fire to pursue. "We must be content," said Hotham; "we have done very well." "Now," said Nelson, "had we taken ten sail, and had allowed his eleventh to escape when it had been possible to have got at her, I

uld never have called it 'well done.'" The Nile ustrates the terrible completeness of Nelson's roke. Eleven French ships of the line out of irteen were captured or destroyed, and two gates out of four; two ships of the line, with o frigates, escaped, but only for a time. "Had not been wounded," wrote Nelson, "not a boat ould have escaped to tell the tale!" The Nile s not so much a victory as a conquest.

Nelson, as a matter of fact, revolutionised the ethods of sea-battle. Before his time the tradi-nal and orthodox method of a fleet action was to gage in line, ship to ship; after a certain amount damage had been inflicted and endured, and one two ships had been captured, the fleets separated, d the fight was over. Howe, on the famous First June, captured only six ships thus, after sea olutions stretching through whole days, and when might, with ease, have captured a dozen. rvis, at St. Vincent, captured only four ships. Camperdown, eight ships out of nineteen caped. But Nelson knew not only how to win ttles, but how to reap the uttermost grain of e harvest of victory.

Trafalgar was a victory equally overwhelming. the thirty-three great ships that Villeneuve led t of Cadiz, eighteen were captured or destroyed the fight; four escaped to sea, where they were ken a few days later by Sir Richard Strachan;

eleven, of which only five were French, took refuge in Cadiz, and these became prizes when Spain broke loose from the French alliance. Trafalgar, in this sense, was the most decisive and complete victory won on land or sea throughout the long Napoleonic wars. None of Napoleon's victories—not Marengo, nor Austerlitz, nor Jena—can rival, in completeness of results, Trafalgar.

But if Nelson was the heir of Hawke, and Hood, and Rodney in tactics, he was the heir of Jervis as far as discipline was concerned. Jervis' title to fame does not lie in his tactics. His attack on the Spanish fleet at St. Vincent has been challenged, and is challengeable. To realise this we have only to imagine the battle of St. Vincent, with Nelson's part omitted. The stroke that won the battle was given without any instructions from Jervis. But in the great war Jervis made two magnificent contributions to the sea strength of England. He created a new discipline for its fleets; he shaped the policy of the great blockades. Nothing could well be more fibreless and lax than the discipline of the British navy in the period before the Napoleonic wars. Nothing could well be sterner or wiser than the methods by which Jervis restored that discipline, and made a British fleet the most terrible instrument of sea-battle the world up to that period had known. Jervis, too, revolutionised naval war by his system of long-

stained and iron blockades. He sealed up the ets of France and of Spain in their own ports, d kept watch over them with an ordered and eless vigilance hitherto unknown in naval war. s an incidental result of this system, the temper d seamanship of the imprisoned fleets decayed, ile the skill, audacity, and hardihood of the ets blockading them rose to a level never before own, and that made them irresistible.

Nelson maintained St. Vincent's discipline with- t his severity; and he rivalled St. Vincent him- f in his wise and sleepless care for his men's alth. "Of all the services I lay claim to," Jervis ote, looking back on his whole career, "the eservation of the health of our fleets is my oudest boast." And this was written by the an who won the battle off Cape St. Vincent. All we get here," wrote Nelson, while cruising Toulon, "is honour and salt beef." "My poor lows have not had a morsel of fresh meat or getables for near nineteen weeks." But that ate of things, under the command of either rvis or Nelson, was quite exceptional. Every tail that touched the health or comfort of their ews was studied with a vigilance that never axed. As much care was bestowed upon the siness of securing vegetables for the ships' ppers, and warm blankets for the men's mmocks, as in planning the strategy of a cam-

paign. Upon the task of keeping the minds of his men occupied, their bodies well clad, and their stomachs well filled, Nelson bestowed as much energy as he expended in the pursuit of Brueys or of Villeneuve. He invented amusements for his men; he protected them from useless and vexatious tasks. In an age when the articles of war were written, so to speak, in blood, he humanised the service. Nelson, somehow, could make gentleness a tonic to discipline, where other men used only severity. He used a penknife where St. Vincent took a hatchet, to employ his own figure. And yet through the web of his humane policy ran the iron threads of an unsurpassed discipline.

It was the generation which witnessed the Walcheren expedition, where whole regiments were allowed to perish amid Dutch swamps from sheer lack of common sense in their generals, and out of an entire expedition of 40,000 men 7000 died of sickness, 14,000 were ruined in health for life, and no less than 35,000 passed through the hospitals! But while the generals allowed an army to perish from preventable sickness, the admirals kept their fleets in perfect health through the longest and most wearisome blockades known to history. "No one dies here," wrote Nelson, while his ships were tossing in the fierce south-easters off Toulon; "we are the healthiest squadron

ever served in, and all are in good humour." fter the *Victory* had been twenty months at sea f Toulon, it had only one man sick out of a ew of 840! And practically the same standard ' health prevailed through the whole fleet. elson, as we have said, could take care of every- ody's health except his own.

Nelson, as a battle leader, had many memorable ualities. He himself was trained in a hard and ractical school. He spent two years in a merchant ip, and brought from it a wealth of practical anmanship only to be learned in the forecastle. e mastered the tangled pilotage of the Thames outh by having charge of a decked longboat aversing the Thames and Medway as a tender the guard-ship; and not Marryat's Poor Jack new those shallows and mud-banks better than d Nelson. He was educated in the school of the a itself. Sky and sea were his blackboard; mpests and shoals and swaying sea-tides were s teachers. Groping with sounding-lead along e sand-banks and shoals of the Thames, or nder scorching suns, amid the quays and mud- nks of the West Indies, constituted an excellent aining for the great sailor who was to send his et across the head of Brueys' line at the Nile, nd feel his way along the winding course of the ing's Channel to attack the Danish ships at openhagen.

Nelson's experiences in actual fighting were almost unrivalled, even in that hard-fighting age. His record of his services, when applying for a pension in 1797, is almost laughable in its scale and details. "Your memorialist," he wrote, "has been in four actions with the fleets of the enemy, in three actions with frigates, in six engagements against batteries, in ten cutting-out engagements, and in the taking of three towns. . . . He has assisted in the capture of seven sail of the line, six frigates, four corvettes, eleven privateers, and fifty sail of merchantmen. He has been actually engaged against the enemy upwards of one hundred and twenty times, has lost his right eye and arm, and been severely wounded and bruised in his body." When he drew up this iron catalogue, Nelson was not yet forty. The Nile and Trafalgar were still unfought. But the record makes it clear how thoroughly by this time the steel of his fiery spirit had been fused in the red flame of battle, and tempered in the hardships of long blockades.

Mahan says that Nelson "concentrates in himself the sea glory of that period;" and, as far as fleet actions are concerned, this is literally true. If Nelson's victories are blotted out, what record of the sea fighting of that time remains? Jervis, it is true, commanded at Cape St. Vincent; but it was Nelson who won the battle. The only great sea victory of that period in which Nelson had

no share was Camperdown; and Camperdown itself is a victory of only the third class.

One noble feature in Nelson's leadership was the place assigned in it to duty. He had as keen and passionate a craving for glory—for the achievement of great deeds—as Napoleon himself. But the "glory" he coveted was the child of duty, and was to be won only in its service. When, as Trafalgar began, Nelson's last immortal message was spelt out by the flags of the *Victory* to the British fleet, it may, perhaps, seem that the word "Duty" found a place in it almost by accident. But this was certainly not the case. In that message Nelson was unconsciously writing, and writing in imperishable characters, and for unborn generations, the supreme law of his own professional life. Duty for him was absolute and imperative; the word that ended all debate, that over-mastered every other motive, and that constituted an instant and supreme call to action. And, weighed in the scales against "duty," all other things that men are most apt to value—ease, vanity, health, money, life itself—were, for him, but as sand-grains.

It is true that Nelson's conception of duty was sometimes narrow and even half-heathenish. The whole code of sea ethics for a naval officer, as he once expounded it, consisted of three articles:—1. To obey orders. 2. To honour the king. 3. To hate all Frenchmen! That it was the duty of an

honest British salt to "hate a Frenchman" was
doctrine which Nelson preached, in season and ou
and with a diligence worthy of a better them
"I trust Almighty God," he wrote, "will, in Egyp
overthrow these pests of the human race." Nelson
gifts as "a good hater" would have delighted D
Johnson.

There is, of course, a touch of humorous—or
feminine—exaggeration in all this, and Nelson,
a matter of fact, treated his beaten foes—Frenc
or Spanish—with an exquisite courtesy and gen
rosity. The first article of his own creed—to obe
orders—Nelson observed himself, with a judiciou
reserve. He had the courage which could obe
orders at all risks; but he had also that rarer an
nobler courage, when his orders were in conflic
with reason or with national honour, to disobe
them. Duty, as Nelson conceived it, consisted i
an intense and passionate form of patriotism;
loyalty to king and country which had a right t
demand any form of sacrifice; a spirit whic
counted the honour of the flag more than life, an
the doing of the assigned task more than ease
health.

Nelson, like all the great captains of war, whethe
by sea or land, had, in a supreme degree, the a
of winning the confidence and kindling the enthu
siasm of his men. There was a magic in his loo
and voice, a swift contagion in his own ever-burnin

enthusiasm, an all-conquering spell in his generosity of temper and quickness of sympathy which enabled him to hold the very hearts of his crews in the hollow of his hand. Never before, or since, was there a leader so loyal to his own followers, so generous to praise, so quick to reward, so fierce to defend. "By G—, I will not lose Hardy," said Nelson, when, close pursued by an overpowering force of the enemy, his officer—who had leaped into a boat to save a drowning man—was dropping fast astern. And Nelson backed his sails, risking the loss of his ship—and perhaps of his career—rather than abandon a comrade.

In any failure he blamed himself, never his men or his officers. He grieved for a fallen comrade—as in the case of Parker, mortally wounded in the attack on the Boulogne flotilla—as an elder brother might mourn for a younger brother slain in fight. "He is my child," said Nelson of Parker, and he took a lock of his dead officer's hair and vowed it should be buried with him. Out of his own not too amply filled pocket he paid Parker's debts, and provided for his father.

An odd proof of the influence which Nelson unconsciously exercised over the imagination and feelings of his captains is supplied by a letter from Troubridge, written in 1800. Troubridge, it must be remembered, was by temperament a man of steel. He was of the same age as Nelson; they

had been middies together; in reputation he was not so far behind his great admiral. Nelson had shown signs of resenting a real or imaginary neglect of some sort on the part of Troubridge, and that brave man writes in agitation: "Your letter has really so unhinged me that I am quite unmanned and crying. I would sooner forfeit my life—my everything—than be deemed ungrateful to an officer and friend I feel I owe so much to. Pray, pray acquit me. There is not a man on earth I love, honour, and esteem more than your lordship. . . . I pray your lordship not to harbour the smallest idea that I am not the same Troubridge you have known me." Now, when Nelson's imagined frown could bring tears from even Troubridge's eyes, how great must have been his influence on his officers!

Nelson's delight in his own crews and ships was of a vehement, not to say unreasoning and half-laughable sort. He always believed the particular ship he commanded to be the finest afloat, and its crew the best disciplined under the flag. Jervis usually regarded the crews under him as so many sets of scoundrels, and was prepared for any form of villainy from them. Nelson inverted Jervis' method, and did so by the compulsion of his own generous nature. In the seven volumes of his letters there is hardly a word of complaint against his ships or his men; though once, indeed, he

confides to Lady Hamilton that he had shed tears on the prospect of getting a particularly slow and clumsy ship. Of the *Agamemnon*, he writes that "she is without exception the finest sixty-four in the service." But every ship in turn on which Nelson flew his flag he discovered to be the finest the sea carried. Of the *Albemarle*, he wrote, "not a man or officer in her I would wish to change." Of the *Agamemnon*, "nobody can be ill in my ship's company, they are so fine a set." Of his ships in the Mediterranean in 1803, he wrote that they were "the best commanded and the very best manned afloat." Of his captains at the Nile he proclaimed they were "a band of brothers."

Nelson could make his superior officers very uncomfortable; but for all under his own command he had a generous, if somewhat uncritical, admiration and affection quite without parallel in the history of war. And the noble law that trust creates loyalty, and love kindles love, fulfilled itself in Nelson's career.

An amusing illustration of the affection Nelson inspired in his captains, and of the half maternal care they exercised over the fragile and stunted body of their famous leader, is supplied by a letter from Nelson himself to Ball, written from Kiogo Bay in 1801. He was racked with the Baltic cold, and wroth, as was common with him, with the still chillier winds which blew from the Admiralty Board.

"But," he says, "all in the fleet are so truly kind to me that I should be a wretch not to cheer up. Foley has put me under a regimen of milk at four in the morning; Murray has given me lozenges; Hardy is as good as ever, and all have proved their desire to keep my mind easy." That picture of one sea veteran administering warm milk to his admiral at four o'clock in the morning, and of another feeding him tenderly with lozenges, is amusing enough; but it shows more effectively than graver things could do the feeling Nelson inspired in his captains.

It has a curious effect to put side by side the mental impressions produced by a study of the lives of Nelson and of Wellington. The agreements and the differences of the two men are alike remarkable. Nelson was all emotion; Wellington had no more emotion than an icicle. His spirit had in it the hardness of tempered steel. He had neither the ardent loves nor the vehement hatreds which in turn swept through Nelson's nature. Can any one imagine such a phrase as "Kiss me, Hardy," on Wellington's iron lips! Cool, blunt, hard, self-contained, self-sufficient—not to say selfish—Wellington, in many features of his character, is the exact opposite of Nelson. Wellington, had he commanded a ship, would never have backed his fore topsail to pick up Hardy at the risk of losing his vessel. He had no more feeling towards his old

comrades of the battlefield than an oak has to the leaves it shed last autumn. He cared for his men wisely and vigilantly when the battle was over; for he needed them for the next battle. But when the campaign was ended, that was quite another business.

It is certain Wellington never knew that half-boyish delight in combat which effervesced in Nelson's blood. He was too cold alike in intellect and in temper for this. The red wine of battle never intoxicated him. But his courage, though of a different type, was as flawless as that of Nelson, and both men, though in unlike fashions, were terrible fighters. It may well be doubted whether Nelson would have planned, so long in advance, the great lines of Torres Vedras, or could have conducted the slow and bear-like retreat to that stronghold. But the fight on the blood-stained hill of Busaco, which broke like a flash of splendour on the darkness of that retreat, was exactly in Nelson's style. Nelson, perhaps, could not have maintained with Wellington's iron patience the long-enduring, defensive fight at Waterloo. To have been pounded so hard, and so long, without hitting furiously back, and merely waiting for "night or Blucher" to arrive, would not have suited Nelson's temper. Wellington, on the other hand, would never have made that sudden, desperate, and unbidden dash with his single ship on the whole front of the Spanish fleet

which Nelson dared at St. Vincent; nor would he have made his onfall on Brueys' line at the Nile with the same unfaltering and dreadful suddenness which marked Nelson's attack.

Nelson, in a word, shone most in attack. His qualities were swiftness and audacity; though behind those qualities, no doubt, there was a strategy as cool, and almost as forecasting, and as minute as that of Wellington himself. Wellington excelled in defence. He had a long-enduring and iron resolution, which not all the shocks of adverse fortune could move, in a higher degree than Nelson. Wellington, again, failed sometimes as a leader in pushing to the uttermost a beaten foe; while Nelson, who aimed to make each separate battle a conquest, pushed his success in the fight with a fiery energy and thoroughness which recall Napoleon's earlier successes.

The genius in leadership shown by both men, it may be added, had, when applied to practical affairs, points of closest resemblance. In method, industry, and vigilance as to details, Wellington and Nelson vie with each other. The figure of Wellington, a subaltern who had just put on his red coat, solemnly weighing a private soldier, first in undress, and then in full marching equipment, in order to know exactly how much the man in the ranks carried, may be put beside the figure of Nelson learning seamanship in the forecastle of a merchantman, or as a midshipman

mastering the soundings of the Thames in an open oat. Both of these great leaders, that is, under- ood the practical side of the business of war, and arned every letter in its iron alphabet. Both men, may be added, had a fine loyalty of character. Truth-teller was our English Duke" is Tennyson's mmary of one side of Wellington's character; and e great sailor had a habit of speech as direct and mple as the great soldier. For each of them, too, uty was a word of magic sound. It was per- mptory, final, absolute. Duty was for Wellington the King's salt." "I have eaten the King's salt," e said, "and must serve him anywhere." For elson it was the one consideration about which ebate was impossible, delay a dishonour, and denial e last and worst of treacheries. And the race hich, in the same struggle, produced Nelson to ad its fleets, and Wellington to command its mies, may well think of both its great sons with ride.

Intellectually, Nelson resembled Napoleon rather an Wellington. Morally, of course, the two men ere parted by a measureless gulf. Napoleon was e incarnation of selfishness. Duty was for him irrelevant, or even an unintelligible word. The ery sense of truth was non-existent. Tried by early all moral tests, Nelson and Napoleon were most exact opposites to each other. But as a attle leader, Nelson was on the sea what Napoleon

was on land. He might almost be described as Napoleon translated into sea terms; but it is a Napoleon plus a conscience, and minus the reckless ambition which explains "the Spanish ulcer" and the retreat from Moscow.

Nelson certainly showed on the sea many of the great qualities of leadership Napoleon showed on land. He had the same complete and instant vision of the whole landscape; the same faculty for swift resolve and for lightning-like strokes; the same power to impress the imagination, not only of his own men, but of his foes. He possessed, too, in an equal measure with Napoleon, the ruthless energy in pushing a victory to the uttermost, which is the mark of a great captain.

Yet the difference in the two men as leaders are remarkable. Nelson at Waterloo would have led the Old Guard in person, and have died on the British ridge. He would have done in the retreat from Moscow what Ney did—and what Napoleon did not do, he would have fought in the rear-guard, have fired the last shot, and been the last man across the Dnieper. He might have fought the battle of the Pyramids, but he would certainly not have invited forty centuries to witness the performance!

Nelson had, too, the prescient imagination of a statesman, as well as the keen, sure glance of the fighter. He saw not the battle merely, but the

ampaign; not the campaign only, but the war. e saw the conflict with Revolutionary and Napo- onic France, that is, as we see it now, in the erspective of a century. He saw its inevitable haracter, its tremendous issues.

CHAPTER II

THE MEN OF NELSON'S SCHOOL

"They are my children; they serve in my school, and I glory in them."—Nelson (of his captains).

HAD Nelson a "school"; and if so, how did he influence it? What forces, in a word, shaped the sea-captains of Nelson's time; what was their environment; what ideals had they; by what process was a line of men so formidable evolved? They lifted the flag of England so high that still the race looks back to the time when they had lived, as to its heroic age. What fitted them to play a part so fine, in a drama so great? Had Nelson, we repeat, a "school"? These are questions worth asking, even if no final answer can be given to them.

There is an authentic instance in the British navy of a sailor who, when serving before the mast, was flogged through the fleet for some offence, yet afterwards rose to fly his flag as admiral! No such dramatic case is to be found among Nelson's captains; but they sprang from very diverse stocks, and represent all ranks. Nelson himself was a son of the rectory; and it is almost amusing to reflect how many great soldiers and sailors the

iet parsonages of England have given to British story. Saumarez was of Norman blood; Codington was the son of a Gloucestershire baronet; rker came from a long line of gentlefolk. But llew's father was the commander of a Dover cket; Westcott was the son of a baker; Collingod's father was a bankrupt Northumberland der. Hallowell was a Canadian, born at Halifax; ller, the son of an American loyalist, born at w York.

They were all caught young. Some of them gan their sea career at ten years of age; Parker, ckwood, Berry, Louis, and Nelson himself were oat at eleven; Hardy at twelve; Codrington and vis at thirteen. A hunger for comfort burns the blood of the modern world; but looked at ough modern eyes, what could be more hopesly bankrupt of comfort than the state of a lad ten or eleven, plucked suddenly from all the eltering tenderness of home, and dropped into crowded, dark, and unventilated well of a ldy's berth in a man-of-war. Not, it is true, nan-of-war of Smollett's time; but still of the neration immediately following, and with much out it of the roughness which Smollett has nted in imperishable colours.

For a lad under such conditions there could be no ish games, no school comradeships, no soft home nosphere. His comrades were hardy seamen. The

atmosphere he breathed was stern with discipline Peril was a familiar element in his life. Such a lad—not yet in his teens—might be set, as in the case of Parker, bewildered in the smoke and thunder the swift tragedies and multiplied terrors, of a great sea-battle; or he might, as in the case of Saumarez or of Hardy, find his first cruise stretch through years, until home and all its faces had almost faded out on the tablets of memory.

It is difficult, again, to realise the exact scale and type of ships which were floating homes of the sailors of that day. French ships, as far as size and build went, were much in advance of British ships, and Spanish ships surpassed both. If the British Admiralty possessed a really first-class vessel it owed it to the cutlasses of its sailors, not to the skill of its builders. French shipwrights, indeed could build, and British sailors capture, bigger ships than the Admiralty dockyards could receive. When *Le Commerce de Marseilles*, of 121 guns, in 1793, was brought in triumph by Hood from Toulon to Portsmouth, no dockyard there was big enough to receive her, and she had to be taken round to Plymouth. Yet her tonnage was only 2816 tons. The *Franklin*, captured at the Nile, remained for years—under a new name, the *Canopus*—the finest ship that carried the British flag. It has a curious effect to compare the famous ships of that period—the *Victory* or the "fighting" *Temeraire*, with the

ghty ironclads—the *Hood*, the *Cæsar*, or the *jestic*—which carry the British flag to-day. The *Iloden*, Troubridge's famous ship, was of 1683 is; she had an extreme length of 170 feet, her am was not quite 48 feet, her depth 21 feet. In case of the *Temeraire*, the length of the gun k was 185 feet; she had a beam of 51 feet, a nage of 2111 tons. The *Victory*, of 100 guns, l a slightly larger tonnage than the *Temeraire* 62 tons), an extreme length of 222 feet, a beam 52 feet, a depth of 21 feet 6 inches. The *jestic* of to-day is 390 feet long, 75 feet in beam; has a maximum draught of 27 feet 6 inches, l a displacement of 14,900 tons! She carries—luding her quick-firers—only forty-eight guns; she has a speed of seventeen knots, and given sea m, could probably destroy both the fleets that ntended at Trafalgar without sustaining a scratch -self!

The scanty height between the decks of the ps of Nelson's time made light, or fresh air, or nfort almost impossible. Pellew says that when commanded the *Pelican* his cabin was so low that ile he sat in it his servant could dress his hair n the deck above. Cochrane, when flying his in the *Speedy*, tells us that when he wanted to ve himself, he was accustomed to thrust his head ough the skylight of his cabin, and put his ving materials on the deck itself, above. But

then Cochrane was a tall man, and the *Speedy* was only a tiny sloop. Yet the height between the beams of the orlop deck of the *Victory* was only 5 feet 7 inches; that of the lower and middle decks was only 6 feet; that of the cabin was only 5 feet 11 inches. A tall man, that is, could not stand upright in Nelson's cabin! A ship of, roughly, only 2000 tons burden, with decks so low that a man of decent height could not walk upright betwixt them, and a total crew of nearly 1000 persons crowded within its sides, must have resembled a sort of floating black hole of Calcutta! Yet such a ship, with such conditions, had to cruise off Toulon or Brest for, say, eighteen months at a stretch, never touching shore during the whole of that period. By what miracle of order, skill, and cleanliness, was such a garrison of human beings, crowded into such quarters, kept in health and any approach to comfort?

A lad beginning his sea career started sometimes with the rating of a captain's servant; or he served—as Lord St. Vincent did—for a couple of years before the mast; or he shared the rough comradeships and the hard fare of a merchant ship's forecastle, as Nelson himself did, and Troubridge, and many another of his captains. All this surely was rough schooling, under stern conditions, and might be expected to produce men of a stern and rough type. What, it might be asked, could men trained

this fashion know of books, of science, of history? nat refining forces of any sort could have touched ir lives? If their courage had the temper, their ins must have had almost the narrowness, of a ord blade.

Yet, somehow, the training did not produce this ult. The men of Nelson's time were not rough; y were not untaught. They had, it is true—and l in the highest degree—all the hardy virtues. fertility of resource, in audacity of enterprise, l in a certain faculty for heroic patience—witness the immortal blockades—where shall find men to exceed them? They had a sort web-footed familiarity with the sea in all its nging moods which has never been surpassed. ere was sea salt in their very blood. Yet they e not mere "tarpaulins," such as Smollett nted, with rough speech, narrow brains, and no nners. It is almost amusing to discover how ong were what may be called the home sentiments hese homeless seamen. The domestic strain in n took a new depth, perhaps, from the very ression under which it was doomed to exist. tainly no more domestic-minded man than, say, lingwood ever lived. And when we get a npse of the letters these hardy seamen wrote to ir wives and mothers and sisters—as in the case Blackwood, of Codrington, of Miller, or of Parker hey are found to burn with a warmth and

tenderness not to be surpassed in any other letters of the same kind known to literature.

It is curious again to note how many bookish men —of which Ball is the type—there were amongst Nelson's captains. If they were denied the processes of education, they somehow contrived to secure many of its most precious results. They had to govern men, and they acquired, unconsciously, all the faculties of government. They were brought in contact, incessantly, with problems of diplomacy and of maritime law, for which they had to find an instant and practical solution. The mere business side of a ship's life—the provision for its health, its food, its equipment—was, for its officers, a constant and most quickening discipline in practical affairs. Whatever impression about the men of Nelson's time is derived from a study of their history and their correspondence, it certainly is not one of an untaught and narrow-minded type.

So far as their profession went, they had, it is true, no "scientific" training in the modern sense. Competitive examinations were unknown. Training ships were not yet invented. The training of a middy depended very much on the accident of his captain's character and temper; for the captain was half father and whole pedagogue to all his middies. And to their credit be it said, the captains of that period did not often fail in a wise, if rough, kindness towards the boys in the middies' cabin. Parker's

unconscious picture of his first captain, Duckworth, is worthy of Peter Simple; but it shows that Duckworth deserved St. Vincent's account of him as "the best captain for the instruction of a youth in the navy." Collingwood gives a similar picture of the care his captain took to make him a good seaman and a capable officer. But the ship itself was, for the middy of that pediod, a school, with lessons always in progress. Every flaw in the wind, with its accompanying shift of canvas, was a lesson. The change of the watches, the daily reckoning, the disciplined routine of work, every incident of the cruise—the pursuit, the boat attack, the capture—all this was, in the best sense, an education. The middy of that day was not given a set of book lessons to be learned by rote; he was drilled through every waking hour in practical things to be done; and on the doing of which hung the safety of the ship, the honour of the flag, and the life and death of men.

Parker gives us a copy of the certificate which a middy received when he passed. He must have been at sea more than six years in ships named in the certificate; he had to produce his own journals kept during the whole of that period, and a certificate of "diligence, sobriety, and of obedience to command" from every captain under whom he served. The examiners certified that he "could splice, knot, reef a sail, work a ship in sailing,

shift his tides; keep a reckoning of a ship's way by plain sailing and Mercators; observe by the sun or stars; find the variation of the compass; and is qualified to do his duty as an able seaman and midshipman." A training which produced such results in a lad may not have been scientific; it certainly owed little to books. But it was practical and effective. It bred seamen.

Danger was, of course, a perpetual element in the sea-life of that day. Nelson's captains did not look out from some magic casement

> "Opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in fairylands forlorn."

They actually sailed on seas more thickly sown with perils than any of which poets have dreamed; when any dawn might see a battle, and any wind bring down a foe. Danger lay about them like an atmosphere. It took many forms. There were the ordinary perils of the sea—peril of rock, and fire and tempest; the danger incident to crowded ships, who for months never entered a port—danger of scurvy and fever; peril, too, in crews of such rough material, of mutiny. The *Hermione* was not the only ship that vanished with an atmosphere of treachery and murder from under the British flag. Then, too, there were the perpetual dangers of battle. The British sailor kept watch off hostile ports and cruised in hostile seas, in which any

sail might be that of an enemy, and any dawn might bring with it the eagerness of pursuit, or the necessity for flight. A sailor who had once gone through the nerve-shaking experience of a great fleet battle, must have emerged from the process with some subtle change of character. And many of the sailors of that day had fought through the whole gamut of sea-battles, from Rodney and De Grasse, at the Battle of the Saints, to Nelson and Villeneuve, at Trafalgar.

And in that constant atmosphere of peril the sailors of Nelson's time were tempered to a strange hardness of valour. The mind has a curious habit of adjusting itself to any constant element in its environment; and for the men we are describing, peril came to be as familiar as their daily bread—and as little heeded. A striking example of Nelson's own indifference to death occurred just as Trafalgar began. He was parting company on the *Victory's* quarterdeck with Blackwood; the French guns were already bellowing sullenly. Blackwood expressed the hope that he would greet his admiral as a victor when the fight was over. "God bless you, Blackwood," said Nelson; "I shall never speak to you again!" A sure instinct warned Nelson that this was his last fight. Somewhere under that cloudy firmament of battle beneath which he was drifting the fatal bullet would smite him. But he went calmly on with his duty, with not a thought

save for the fight before him. He walked composedly to and fro on his quarterdeck with Hardy beside him, and stopped to smile at his friend when a cannon ball passed betwixt them, covering them both with splinters. For Nelson, the duty in which he was engaged blotted out all memory of swift-coming, inevitable death. He knows it is there; but he does not turn his head for a moment to regard it. Now, to call the temper of spirit so little moved by the certainty of imminent death "courage," is to use a quite inadequate word.

That same easy indifference to peril, the unconsciousness that it so much as existed, was the common characteristic of the seamen of that period; though it sometimes took odd and even amusing shapes. Whoever reads the old naval chronicles of that period will find that behind the faded characters and the inartistic English of their pages shine gleams of strange heroism. Tales of adventure and of death are told, told clumsily and with an entire unconsciousness that there is anything splendid about the story; yet these tales thrill the reader with admiration, even while they half move him to laughter.

Betwixt the courage of the quarterdeck and the courage of the forecastle there were, of course, subtle differences, and yet many points of agreement.

Jack's courage has running through it a strain of boyish simplicity and recklessness. It depends

little upon what may be called the artificialities of discipline, and much on generous comradeship, and on an almost childlike faith in the leadership of the officer. But there is, in the courage of sailors of all ranks, a strain of *gaieté de cœur* rarely discoverable in the sternly-ordered ranks of a good regiment. This often gives an element of humour to the story of a sea-fight, and the boyish quality in a sailor's courage leads to feats being attempted—and accomplished—which a wiser courage would have pronounced impossible in advance, and which, indeed, when told afterwards in cold blood, often strain the credulity of the listener to the breaking point.

Both of these qualities—the boyishness and the daring—are illustrated by an incident in the siege of Curaçoa in 1804. The British ships had landed some 600 seamen and marines to assist in the siege, and one battery of 18-pounder carronades was held by some seamen under Lieutenant Willoughby. The fighting was deadly, but not so deadly as the climate. Officers and men slept on the ground without tents; dysentery raged amongst them, and nearly a third of the force was in hospital. Under these conditions Lieutenant Willoughby yet kept up the fire of his battery, repulsed a score of sorties, and toiled with splendid energy to keep up the spirits of his men, as well as to keep down those of the Dutch. As one method of doing this, he had a chair and table placed upon the open

breastwork of his little battery, and, day by day, for more than three weeks, he sat in that exposed position within easy range of the Dutch fort above. "The earth," says James in his "Naval History," "was ploughed up all round; men were killed close to the spot, but still the table and the chair, and the daring young officer who sat there, remained untouched." All this, of course, proves amazingly bad shooting on the part of the Dutch. Only once, indeed, did they succeed in hitting the chair, and then, as it happened, Willoughby was not in it. One afternoon a brother officer, Lieutenant Perrot, was visiting the battery, and laughingly undertook to take Willoughby's place in the chair for a shift. He sat down in the chair, and leaned forward, with his arm upon his knee; scarcely had he done this when a shot from the Dutch fort carried off his arm, smashed the knee upon which the arm had rested, and knocked the table to atoms! Poor Perrot was carried off; but Willoughby brought out another chair, calmly sat down in it, and proceeded to work his battery from that point of vantage, the Dutch gunners toiling in vain to send in another successful shot. Willoughby justified his exploit by the argument that he wanted to keep up the spirits of his dysentery wasted men by showing his contempt for Dutch shooting.

Another story shows the same feature of daring

rising to a humorous pitch. In November 1803, H.M.S. *Blanche*, cruising off St. Domingo, sent in its red cutter under the command of a middy named A'Court, to collect sand for the use of the ship. The middy had for his crew one marine and seven seamen, and the captain of the *Blanche*, knowing the impish delight in wild adventure of his middies, forbade youngsters sent on trips of this kind to carry arms in the boat. The men, however, as eager for fun as the middy, smuggled half-a-dozen muskets through a port into the boat, and A'Court and his crew set off in search both of sand and of excitement. In the dusk of nightfall they came across an armed schooner lying becalmed. She carried half-a-dozen guns and a detachment of forty soldiers. A'Court, with his eight men and six muskets, at once swung round to attack the Frenchman. With uncanny skill the lad kept his boat in the wake of the enemy, so that only the stern guns could be fired at him. The muskets of the Frenchmen shot down two of A'Court's tiny crew, but with the six survivors the lad tumbled amongst the schooner's crew, drove them all below, the forty French infantry included, and carried off his prize in triumph to the *Blanche!* The detachment of French infantry was under the command of a colonel who had distinguished himself at Arcole, the most famous of Napoleon's Italian victories. His skull had been fractured in that

battle, and a piece of silver plate, engraved with the word "Arcole," covered half the veteran's head. When asked why he and his detachment surrendered to a boy and six seamen, the Frenchman replied, with a shrug and a sigh, that "it was all owing to *mal de mer*," no doubt an entirely adequate explanation! There is a strain of the absurd in this story; yet, what an almost impish pluck it argues in both officer and men.

A tale as extraordinary is that of the recapture of the *Windham*, mounting 26 guns, by two boats' crews of the *Sirius*, armed only with boat-stretchers.

The *Sirius* was cruising off Port Louis in 1810, and in the grey dawn of August 21 discovered a ship, apparently heavily armed, making for the strong batteries that guard the entrance of Riviere-Noire. The wind was light and off the land, and the *Sirius* had no chance of cutting off the enemy. In the uncertain haze of the morning the size of the ship and its armament could not be exactly made out, and Lieutenant Watling was sent off in the gig, with five seamen, followed by the jolly-boat, with a midshipman and four seamen, to carry the ship by boarding. The men jumped eagerly into the boats, and pushed off at speed; and then it was discovered that, by some amazing blunder, not a cutlass or a musket had been placed in the boats. The men were unarmed! They were still pulling steadily on, however, and as they approached the

ship, it loomed through the haze bigger and yet bigger. The *Windham*, as a matter of fact, was an Indiaman, of 900 tons burden, carrying 26 guns, in charge of a French prize crew of thirty seamen and a lieutenant. The British had, of course, no means of knowing the exact strength of the *Windham;* they saw the ship was the size of a frigate, and guessed it to be an English prize. Their own ship was three miles distant, they were without arms, the ship they were about to attack was almost under the shelter of friendly batteries. Watling, however, proposed to the middy that they should attack, and both crews assented with a shout. They pulled up to the *Windham*, clambered up its tall black sides, armed only with the boat-stretchers, and these eleven unarmed British seamen actually carried a ship of 26 guns within fire of hostile batteries! Not a man of the gallant eleven was killed, and after being for twenty minutes under the fire of the batteries—a fire which killed only some of the unfortunate Frenchmen—the *Windham*, under the light breeze, crept out of reach of the guns, and was brought off in triumph to the *Sirius*.

This can only be described as a mad trick, but it was of that sort of "madness" which—when it succeeds, at all events—men call heroism.

A tale of well-nigh incredible daring, qualified by humorous coolness, is supplied by the performance

of the *Sheerness*, a tiny hired cutter, off Brest i
September 1803. The *Sheerness* was a little look
out cutter, with a crew of thirty men and boy
and a microscopic battery of eight 4-pounder
employed in watching the French fleet in Bres
harbour. Its commander, Lieutenant Rowed, wa
a youthful officer of A'Court's school. Rowed dis
covered, in the haze of a September dawn, tw
chasse-marées, close in shore, stealing into Bres
harbour. He despatched a boat with seven me
and a mate to cut off one, and, with the *Sheerne*
itself, he chased the other close under a heav
battery, about nine miles to the east of Bec-du
Raz. At ten o'clock it fell dead calm, and th
chasse-marée, under the shelter of the battery
defied Lieutenant Henry Rowed and his absur
cutter. Rowed had one tiny boat hanging fro
the stern, intended to carry two hands, but int
which five men, with much delicate balancing
might be packed. Rowed announced his intentio
of putting off in the dinghy to attack the chass
and called majestically for four volunteers. Th
whole crew stepped forward. The boatswain an
three hands were picked, and, with the lieutenant
got into the dinghy, and set off on a row of fou
miles to attack the chasse-marée, battery, and, i
fact, the whole realm of France itself, if necessary!

The battery stood within a stone's throw of th
beach, the chasse-marée was run ashore, and thirty

'rench soldiers were drawn up on the sand to rotect it with their musketry. The dinghy, with s five tarry-breeched heroes on board, solemnly umped against the side of the chasse-marée, and as s crew clambered over the bulwarks on one side, the 'renchman's crew disappeared with a many-legged plash into the shallow water on the other side. he French infantry opened fire, but Rowed and is four men, having hoisted the foresail as a sort f canvas screen, so that the soldiers at least should ot take deliberate aim at them, proceeded to cut ie vessel's cable and get her afloat. The musketry 'acked fiercely from the beach, and the tapping of ie musket-balls sounded like the strokes of many ammers on the ship's bulwarks. But the flowing de lifted the chasse-marée off the sand, and Rowed nd his men got once more into their dinghy, and roceeded to tug their prize out to sea. They had owed her a third of a mile when a French boat iat had stolen up unobserved, containing an officer nd nine men, armed with muskets, rounded the ern of the captured chasse-marée and drew up longside. The English boatswain instantly dropped is oar, clambered from the dinghy over the chasse-iarée's bows, ran aft to where the French boat was rawing up, and, without cutlass or musket, but ourishing his clenched fists, challenged the French-ien to "come on!" The Frenchmen actually aused before that threatening apparition; perhaps

it was generosity that forbade them to fire on single and unarmed man. Meanwhile Rowed a his three sailors, with some difficulty, clamber out of their dinghy, and, running aft with muske opened fire on the French boat. The Frenchm hesitated to make a dash, and, while they hesitat the sails of the chasse-marée filled, the craft heel over, and glided on its course. The French bo delivered itself of an angry splutter of musket the great battery swore at large from the cliff ov head, and one heavy shot after another splashed t chasse-marée with spray. But Rowed and his fo comrades carried off their prize unhurt, though t bulwarks of the chasse-marée were pustuled wi French bullets. This, again, is a story to smile a yet it is a little patch of prosaic fact. And what glimpse it affords of the daring temper of Briti sailors in the days of Nelson.

If one of Nelson's captains could have been p under a microscope, and all the elements whi went to make up a type so fine had been cat logued, the list would be striking, even if some its elements were rather absurd. Hate of Frenc men was, no doubt, an element, though that "hat vanished instantly in the presence of an actu Frenchman who had fought his battle and haul down his flag. Love of adventure, too, was a element; so was the satisfaction of plundering fat prize. But there were finer elements; pri

race; pride in the flag; loyalty to king and untry; the impulse of discipline; the dread of shonour; the sense of comradeship with gallant en and of partnership in great deeds. And nongst these forces the personal influence of elson is certainly to be counted. He was their eal. The infection of his lofty and eager spirit aught lower natures and hurried them beyond emselves. We describe elsewhere the school for aptains which Nelson held almost daily on the uarterdeck of the *Vanguard* during the pursuit Brueys. Berry tells how he discussed with his aptains the best plan of attacking the enemy in very possible situation by night or by day. Nelson, a word, was so charging the minds of his captains ith his plans, that when the moment for action ame—and it came suddenly—there was no need spell out clumsily by signal what their admiral anted them to do. They were already saturated ith that knowledge.

Parker gives an amusing instance of how Nelson rained his frigate captains. The *Amazon* and the *Phœbe* were starting on a cruise together, and their aptains—Parker himself and Capel, both mere lads —were taking farewell of Nelson. He seized the pportunity to give them a lesson in tactics. They ere going in search of a pair of French frigates, nd Nelson enjoined on them his characteristic and avourite mode of attack. They should not each

single out an opponent and fight him; both shoul
if possible, fall upon one Frenchman; then, if su
cessful, chase the other. "Then," added Nelson, "
you do not take the second, still you have won
victory, and your country will gain a frigate." Th
of course, was Nelson's own characteristic ar
favourite method of doubling on his enemy, ar
then beating him in detail; but Nelson saw th
half doubt on the faces of the two gallant la
before him. If there were two Frenchmen the
would certainly take one apiece, and he added, ha
laughing and half snappishly, "I dare say yo
consider yourselves a couple of fine fellows; ar
when you get away from me you will do nothing
the sort, but think yourselves wiser than I am."

It was not so much by formal precept as by th
unconscious influence of his example that Nelso
influenced the seamen under him. He set th
standard for them. He kindled in them a mood
eager admiration. His very face had for them
touch of magic. What he said was repeated, an
how he looked was described from lip to lip through
out every ship in the squadron over which his fla
flew. The worst thing his men feared was h
disapproval. "What will Nelson think of us?
said Riou, broken-heartedly, and a moment befor
the fatal bullet struck him, as the *Amazon*, obeyin
Parker's signal, drew out of its desperate duel wit
the Trekroner forts at Copenhagen. "What wi

elson think of us?" became for his officers and ews the test by which all conduct was to be dged. His praise was for them fame; his disproval was more bitter than defeat, and more to e dreaded than death.

And still the great Englishman touches with an fluence of the same kind the imagination of all ne fleets of England. His last immortal signal, in sense, flies still at the masthead of every British nip of war. Nay, it is difficult to measure the far-aching influence of Nelson on the men of his race. Then in the darkest hour of the Indian Mutiny, ven the iron nerve of John Lawrence seemed for a oment to give way, and he was tempted to abandon ne Punjaub, Edwardes steadied him by quoting elson's dying words, "Anchor, Hardy, anchor." he quotation was historically quite irrelevant; but ne words brought with them heroic vibrations that erved Edwardes' purpose. There is an echo of elson's last immortal signal in the imperishable pitaph Henry Lawrence framed for himself when ying. So subtly does one heroic spirit call to nother across the gulfs of Time!

A strain of real religion, though of a rudimentary—ot to say inarticulate—sort, ran through the rules nd regulations of the navy. Commanders of His Majesty's ships were "strictly required to show in nemselves a good example of honour and virtue to neir officers and men, and to discountenance and

suppress all dissolute, immoral, and disorde
practices." The regulations of George II. for t
Navy direct that "If any shall be heard to swe
curse, or blaspheme the name of God, the capta
is strictly required to punish them for every su
offence by causing them to wear a wood Collar
some other shameful badge of Distinction for so lo
a time as he shall deem proper." Divine service w
to be performed twice a day, with a sermon at le
every Sunday. And through the lives of many
these great seamen ran, like a thread of gold
strain of devout piety.

In some respects religion is easier for sailors th
for landsmen. The child responds to the mys
breath of religion more easily than does the phi
sopher; and there is something of the simplicity
the child, without its childishness, in the charac
of a good sailor. "*They that go down to the sea
ships, that do business in great waters, these see
works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep.
He commandeth and raiseth up the stormy wind wh
lifteth up the waves thereof.*" The sailor, in a word
directly in contact with the great elementary for
of the world. The dense film of the commonpl
and of the familiar which hides the part God pl
in His own world from the dweller on land,
much less of obscuring power for the seaman. T
great solitudes of the sea, swept of mighty storm
speak to him, as well as the sea depths below hi

and the great heights above him, where burn the stars, which are his signal fires. Beatty, Nelson's surgeon, lets us see Nelson himself kneeling in prayer in the very hour of Trafalgar. Ball was a man of devoutest piety. So was Saumarez; the sanctities of a dying saint lie on his death-bed. Parker stored the cells of his memory with the collects of the English liturgy, and their cadences would chime, like the sound of far-off bells, in his brain as he walked the quarterdeck of his ship. When he was a white-haired admiral he would discuss with his flag-lieutenant the charm of Ken's Evening Hymn, and declare it to be one of the finest prayers ever composed. Pellew, afterwards Lord Exmouth, is another example of a great seaman who was also a devoutly religious man. His brother, Israel Pellew, who, to use Mahan's words, 'followed Nelson into the fire of Trafalgar"—his ship was the fourth in the great fray—died with the words on his lips, "I know in Whom I have believed."

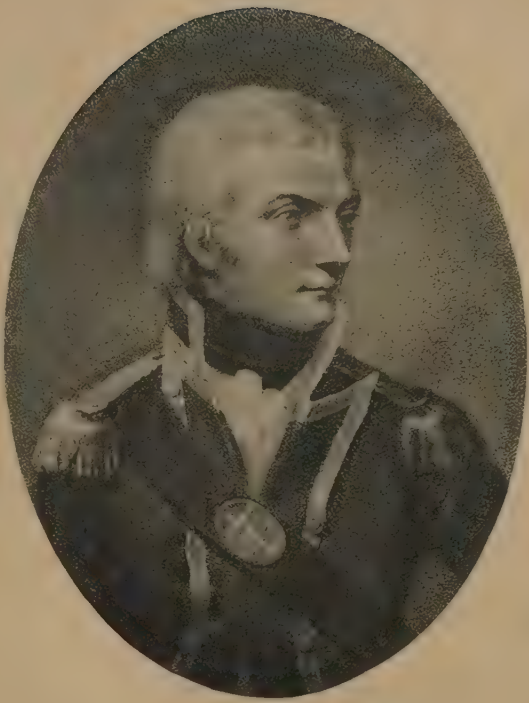
On the whole, Englishmen of this generation may well be proud not only of the great battles fought for their country, the splendid valour, the perfect seamanship shown by the sailors of Nelson's time, but for those still nobler qualities to be found in them: their patriotism; their loyalty to duty; their high standard, both of manliness and of honour.

CHAPTER III

SIR EDWARD BERRY (1768–1831)

"Here comes Berry. Now we shall have a fight!"
—NELSON ON THE EVE OF TRAFALGAR.

THAT sentence from Nelson's lips exactly ex
presses Berry's characteristics and reputation
He was not an administrator, a diplomatist,
tactician, a philosopher; he was, first and last,
fighting man. Fortune, with open hands, thrus
fights upon him. They pursued him everywhere. H
won his earliest promotion in a boarding exploit. H
first becomes visible to history at large when clamber
ing up the mizzen chains of the *San Nicolas* at S
Vincent, leading the attack in that memorable an
heroic exploit in which one sorely battered Englis
74 captured, with cutlass and pistol, two Spanis
first-rates in succession. Berry was the only ma
in the British fleet, except Collingwood, entitled t
wear three medals as having commanded a shi
in three general actions—the Nile, Trafalgar, an
San Domingo. But he shared, in addition, wel
nigh all the fighting of that period. He was wit
Howe on June 1, and with Hughes in the lo
procession of fights which that dogged, if som



SIR EDWARD BERRY

From a portrait in the "Naval Chronicle"

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what slow-moving, sailor fought with Suffren in Indian waters.

Berry could never have commanded a fleet. His fame as a gallant fighter, indeed, suffered from the time he commanded a ship of his own. He could never have planned a great battle, for he lacked the tactician's brain. But if some one else only planned a clear, specific bit of fighting, no matter how desperate, Berry could carry out the plan with serene cheerfulness and exhaustless courage. He would lead the boarders, cutlass in hand, against any odds, with a light-hearted daring which made him the delight of the Jacks who followed him; and he would have fought his battery to the last cartridge and the last man with more than bull-dog stubbornness. Perhaps there was a little touch of half-affectionate contempt in the regard in which Berry was held by his superiors. For Berry fought much as a bulldog fights, with a sort of half-blind courage, magnificent in its fearlessness and persistency, but having in it very much more of muscles than of brain. One version indeed—an unstarched and unofficial version—of Nelson's words quoted at the beginning of this sketch is, "Here comes that —— fool Berry. Now we shall have a fight!"

But Berry was no fool. He was a fine seaman, and understood the practical part of his profession thoroughly. A vote of the forecastle would pro-

bably have chosen him to command in any desperate cutting-out expedition on hand. But if Berry, instead of Troubridge, had commanded the half-drowned handful of sailors in the square at Santa Cruz, he and most of his men would probably have died at the foot of the citadel walls. Berry would never have brought them off with the ingenious and audacious coolness that Troubridge showed. And if Berry instead of Blackwood had commanded the *Penelope* in that long, tormenting night-pursuit of the *Guillaume Tell*, the frigate would probably have sunk under the guns of the Frenchman. For Berry would certainly have closed with his great antagonist in mere blind, fighting anger; he could never have shown the wary and sustained skill of Blackwood, who kept clear of the huge Frenchman while tormenting him from midnight to daybreak.

Berry, in a word, was a first-class fighting subordinate; and Nelson, who did not enjoy having a critic on his quarterdeck, who wanted a flag-captain of the best fighting quality, but one who was content that his admiral should do all the thinking, chose Berry when he sailed in the *Vanguard* on the immortal cruise which was to end at the Nile.

Berry was of poor family, and began his sea life as a volunteer on the *Burford* of seventy guns. He spent four years in the East Indies on her

and won his commission as a lieutenant, cutlass in hand, in a desperate fight on the deck of a French ship of war which he had boarded. In 1796 he was appointed as lieutenant on the *Agamemnon*, and first came in contact with Nelson. He was then twenty-eight years of age, a model of physical energy and activity. His fire and zeal caught Nelson's eye at once, and he took Berry with him to the *Captain*; and while Nelson was on shore, toiling and fighting in the trenches in front of Porto Ferrajo, Berry was left in command of her. This was a stroke of singular good fortune for him, and won him the rank of commander. While waiting for a ship, however, he remained as a supernumerary on board the *Captain*, and thus, by another stroke of good fortune, found himself an idler on Nelson's ship in the great fight at Cape St. Vincent.

When the call came for boarders to carry the great *San Nicolas* Berry found again the opportunity which exactly suited him, and which brought out his special gifts. No one could clamber up the tall sides of a Frenchman or a Spaniard with quicker foot or gayer heart than Berry. In the immortal memorandum in which Nelson himself tells the tale of the great exploit the figure of Berry appears illuminated as if by a flash of lightning. Nelson tells how he directed Captain Miller to put his helm a-starboard, and, with his

shrill, high-pitched voice calling for boarders, gave the word to board just as the two great ships clashed together, the tall side of the Spaniard towering above the decks of the *Captain*. Says Nelson, "The first man who jumped into the enemy's mizzen chains was Captain Berry. . . . He was supported from our spritsail yard, which hooked in the mizzen rigging." Miller, a sailor of Berry's own fighting gifts, was in the act of following; "but," says Nelson, "I directed him to remain." A soldier of the 69th with the butt end of his musket smashed in the upper quarter gallery window of the Spaniard; and, writes Nelson, "I jumped in myself, and was followed by others as fast as possible."

Berry meanwhile had clambered up the high bulwarks of the Spaniard, and jumped down on to its well-like decks. A stream of boarders tumbling from the spritsail yard followed him, and, Berry leading, they rushed the Spaniard's poop. When Nelson, having fought his way across the cabins and broken open the cabin doors, reached the quarterdeck, he found Berry in triumphant possession of the poop, and the Spanish flag fluttering down. The *San Josef* now opened a spluttering fire of muskets and pistols on the boarders visible on the forecastle and poop of the *San Nicolas*, and Nelson instantly gave the word to board her in turn. She could only be reached

at the main chains; and Berry, with all his quickness of hand and foot and tingling fighting impulse, could hardly take the lead of his own admiral. He was decorously assisting Nelson into the main chains of the huge Spaniard when a Spanish officer thrust his head over the quarterdeck rail above them and announced that they surrendered.

Those few wild moments on the quarterdeck of the *San Nicolas* and in the main chains of the *San Josef* constituted a link bewixt Nelson and Berry that never quite broke. When next he commanded a squadron, Nelson promised Berry that he should be his flag-captain; and so Berry found the great opportunity of his life on the quarterdeck of the *Vanguard* in Nelson's memorable pursuit of Brueys across the Mediterranean, and in the historic victory of Aboukir Bay.

Berry's one excursion into the realms of literature belongs to this period of his life. In the *Naval Chronicle* of 1799 appears a long and curiously interesting narrative of both the pursuit and the battle, "drawn up from the minutes of an officer of rank in the squadron." The writer is Berry, and his narrative is really one of the best accounts of the doings of the fleet during those three memorable months betwixt the departure of the *Vanguard* from Gibraltar on May 9, and the actual fighting in Aboukir Bay on August 1, to be found anywhere. It is a business-

like story; the tale of a great sea-chase, and of a sea-fight, told by a sailor and for sailors. It has no pretensions to literary charm, and yet it has a certain quality of luminousness and of graphic force not always found in more ambitious literature. The unconscious personal element in the story has sometimes an amusing effect.

Thus Berry tells, with simple-minded pride and delight, the story how Nelson, after the great storm of May 22, from which the *Vanguard* crept in a state of semi-wreck, determined to stick to his shattered flagship, and not to exchange it for, say, the *Orion* or the *Alexander*. With a sailor's natural bias in favour of his own ship, again, Berry discovers that the poor battered *Vanguard*, after all, "sails and works as well as the other ships," in spite of her stumpy jurymasts and patched canvas. Berry gives us the gossip of the *Vanguard's* quarterdeck, and records how, when Troubridge with the rest of the squadron had joined them, Nelson confided to him that "he would now be a match for any hostile fleet in the Mediterranean, and his only desire was to encounter one."

War had swept the sea clean, and the long voyage across the lonely seas, broken too seldom by a slanting white sail on the horizon, is reflected with curious clearness in Berry's narrative. Once they caught a glimpse of half-a-dozen topsails above

he sea rim; their cut showed that they were Spanish merchant ships. They must be richly aden. Here was prize-money in unknown amounts nder their lee, waiting to be taken. But Nelson's iery soul scorned to turn aside from the pursuit of Brueys to capture a few stray galleons. Whether, ndeed, the Jacks in the forecastle shared Nelson's scorn of mere prize-money may be doubted. They must have contemplated with watering mouths hose fat Spaniards, their topsails growing ever ainter, going off to leeward.

We get a glimpse from Berry's narrative of the liscipline and methods which brought Nelson's ships into such unsurpassed fighting condition. The decks of all the ships, Berry says, were kept perfectly clear night and day. Every man was ready to start to his post at a moment's notice. The crews were daily exercised at the great guns and small arms. The fleet, in a word, was kept at the highest point of discipline and in instant readiness for battle. Nelson, in addition, throughout the whole of that memorable cruise turned the quarterdeck of the *Vanguard* into what can only be described as a perpetual "school for captains." Whenever the weather admitted he summoned the captains on board the flagship, where, says Berry, "he would fully develop to them his own ideas of the different and best modes of attack, and such plans as he proposed to execute upon falling in

with the enemy, whatever their position or situation might be by night or day." "There was no possible position in which they could be found that he did not take into his calculations, and for the most advantageous attack of which he had not digested and arranged the best possible plans. With the masterly ideas of their admiral, therefore, on the subject of naval tactics, every one of his captains was most thoroughly acquainted." This explains why, when the moment of attack came—and came suddenly—signals were so little needed.

Nelson hoped to catch Brueys, with all his transports, in the open sea. If this happened, the fleet was to divide into three squadrons, under Troubridge, Saumarez, and Nelson himself. Two divisions were to attack the French men-of-war, the third was to devote itself solely to the destruction of the transports. It is interesting to reflect on what would have happened if Nelson had got loose amongst the French transports, with Napoleon himself on one of them. It would have been a pack of sea-wolves harrying a flock of very distressed sheep.

Berry himself seems, temporarily at least, to have become saturated with Nelson's ideas as a result of these perpetual lessons in tactics on the quarterdeck of the *Vanguard*. He sees things with Nelson's eyes; he gives us—no doubt second hand—little fragments of Nelsonian wisdom. He records the

admirable maxim, for example, that "courage alone will not lead to conquest without the aid and direction of exact discipline and order." This is certainly a bit of wisdom which did not grow on the soil of Berry's unassisted intellect. Berry, again, helps us to catch—at least for an instant—a glimpse of the Frenchmen in Aboukir Bay as Nelson's eye saw them. "The admiral," he says, "viewed these with the eye of a seaman determined on attack; and it instantly struck his eager and penetrating mind that where there was room for an enemy's ship to swing, there was room for one of ours to anchor." That sentence is the key to the tactics which won the Nile.

Only an actual eye-witness could have described "the wave of joy" which ran through the crowded decks of the British ships when it was certain the Frenchmen were at last in sight; and only one who stood on the quarterdeck of the *Vanguard* could have known that "the gladdest" man in the whole fleet was Nelson himself. "Of the ardour and vigour" with which the British sailors toiled at their guns when the actual fighting began Berry again is able to speak as an eye-witness. Then, with a sailor's touch, Berry adds, "The wind was at this time N.N.W., and blew what seamen call a topgallant breeze. It was necessary to take in the royals when we hauled upon the wind." Berry adds a characteristic sea detail to the description

of the actual onfall of the British ships: "In standing-in, our leading ships," he writes, "were unavoidably obliged to receive into their bows the whole fire of the broadsides of the French line. . . . At this time the necessary number of our men were employed aloft in furling sails, and on deck in hauling the braces, &c., preparatory to our casting anchor." Berry once more gives us, with a sailor's directness, the explanation of why the French fleet was missed by the pursuing British both on their way to Alexandria and on their return from Alexandria to Syracuse. "The French," he says, "steered a direct course for Candia, by which they made an angular passage towards Alexandria, whilst we steered a direct course for that place without making Candia at all." This plan shortened the distance, but it missed the French. On the return to Syracuse the British took the northern course from Alexandria, while the French took a southern course to it, and so missed each other again.

Berry played his part gallantly enough on the quarterdeck of the *Vanguard*. When Nelson—struck on the brow by a bit of flying langridge from the *Spartiate*—was falling, his face covered with blood, it was Berry who caught him in his arms. "I am killed," said Nelson to Berry. "Remember me to my wife." Berry had now to fight the ship; as flag-captain, indeed, he had to direct the fleet, for the *Vanguard* was the only ship whose signals

commanded obedience everywhere. Fortunately, the ships needed no "direction." Each was busy pounding into submission its immediate enemy. In his despatch Nelson, who, under a generous impulse, ran easily into superlatives, writes: "The support and assistance I received from Captain Berry cannot be sufficiently expressed. I was wounded in the head and obliged to be carried off the deck; but the service suffered no loss by that event. Captain Berry was fully equal to the important service then going on." As his reward Berry was sent with despatches to England, and he carried with him, as a trophy to be presented to the King, the flag of the second in command of the French fleet. Brueys' flag had, of course, gone down with the *Orient*. Such a trophy, carried by the hands of one who had helped to win it, would have met with a great reception in London; but, alas! that flag is not to be found in any British collection. It was destined, by a very odd turn of events, to fall into French hands again.

Berry sailed for England in the *Leander* on August 15, and no doubt with the natural exultation and pride of a messenger who was carrying tidings so great, and a trophy so proud, to his country. On the 19th, when off Candia, the tall topsails of a great ship coming quickly up before a south-east breeze were visible. It was a French 74, the *Généreux*, one of the two line of battle ships

which had escaped from the Nile. It was an odd meeting. A fugitive from the defeated fleet stumbles on a ship from the victorious fleet carrying the news and the trophies of victory to England. But it was a very unfortunate meeting for the *Leander*. The *Généreux* was twice as big as the *Leander*, carried eighty guns to her fifty, had more than double her weight of broadsides, and more than thrice her number of men. The French ship had 936 men, and the British ship had 282. It was a fight betwixt a man and a boy.

But Thompson, who commanded the *Leander*, was a fighter of high quality, and, with Berry beside him on the quarterdeck, it was certain that the *Leander* would be a very hard nut for even the *Généreux* to crack. Thompson at first made all sail to escape his formidable antagonist, but the *Généreux* brought the wind up with her, and Thompson at last coolly shortened sail and waited for his foe. By nine o'clock the *Généreux* was abeam of the *Leander*, and both ships opened fire. The wind was falling; the two great hulls forged slowly ahead, wrapped in smoke, and smiting each other with swift broadsides. The *Leander*, by half-past ten, was almost completely crippled, and the *Généreux* ran her on board, striking the *Leander* on the starboard bow and dropping alongside with a crash that smashed the lower deck ports of the British ship. Again and again at this stage of the fight

the French tried to carry the *Leander* by boarding, but as often they were driven back by the marines and the small arms men. And while a hand-to-hand fight thus raged on the upper decks, the great guns on the lower decks of the two ships were thundering wrathfully at each other across an interval of only a few inches. A breath of wind now drove the *Généreux* ahead of the *Leander*, and that ship lay completely disabled, with her mizzen-mast over her stern and her foretopmast over the larboard. The *Généreux* tacked and bore down again on the *Leander*, intending to end the fight at a blow; but the indomitable British ship with the aid of a spritsail was able to luff, in broken-winged fashion, under the stern of the Frenchman, and raked her whole length with every gun that could be brought to bear.

This unequal fight lasted for six and a half hours, but by that time the *Leander* had lost all power of movement. The *Généreux* took a position on its larboard bow, and venomously raked its unfortunate antagonist. No stick was standing on the *Leander* save the bowsprit and the stumps of her fore and main masts. Her decks were strewed with the dead or wounded; half her guns were useless, owing to the wreckage of spars lying on them. Thompson and Berry held a brief consultation, and then a pike with a French jack at the end of it was thrust above the shattered bulwark; the

Leander had surrendered. But the *Leander* had fought magnificently if disastrously. Her killed and wounded amounted to ninety-two, nearly one-third of her total crew; the killed and wounded on board the *Généreux* amounted to some 288. The *Leander*, in a word, disabled as many Frenchmen as the total number of her own crew amounted to. The *Généreux* was left without a boat that could float, and her boatswain, with one of her middies, had to swim to the *Leander* to take possession of the hard-won prize.

The French, with the memory of the Nile rankling in their blood, behaved very badly to their beaten foe. They plundered the ship; they rifled the pockets of their prisoners; they stole the very instruments from the English doctor. A cruel neglect was shown to the wounded. Berry remonstrated with one of the French officers, and reminded him how different Nelson treated his prisoners. "Ah!" was the Frenchman's reply, "but the French are expert at plunder." The truth is the Frenchmen felt they were avenging Aboukir Bay.

The English officers were released on parole at Corfu, but the seamen were kept prisoners. An attempt was made to persuade some of the English sailors to serve under the French flag, and the reply of one honest maintopman still survives in the traditions of the forecastle: "No! you d—d

French rascal," was the answer; "give us back our little ship, and we'll fight you again till we sink."

Berry, being exchanged, reached London early in December, and was promptly knighted. Early in 1799 he joined the *Foudroyant*, Nelson's flagship, as captain. Nelson was on shore at Naples when there befell Berry perhaps the most exquisite piece of good fortune he could have desired. He fell in with his old captor, the *Généreux*, and captured her!

The *Généreux*, with a small squadron, was making an attempt to throw supplies into a long-besieged French garrison at Malta; and on the morning of February 18 Lord Keith's squadron intercepted the French ships. The *Généreux* might have escaped, but a British frigate, the *Success*, threw herself across the Frenchman's bows, hung there, and raked her with diligent broadsides. The *Généreux* presently shook off her tiny antagonist, but the *Foudroyant*, an 80-gun ship, was coming up with every stitch of canvas spread; and close behind her came another English 74, the *Northumberland*. And the *Généreux* was not prepared to play against such odds the desperate game the *Leander* had played against her. Berry had only fired his second gun when the *Généreux* struck her colours. Berry hugely enjoyed the interview with his former captors, but it may be doubted whether the pleasure of that interview was shared by the Frenchmen.

Twelve days later another stroke of happiness befell Berry. The only other French ship of the line that had escaped from the Nile, the *Guillaume Tell*, lay at anchor in Malta. On the night of the 30th she made a spirited attempt to escape the British blockade. In the sketch of Blackwood's career we describe the magnificent skill and daring with which, in the little *Penelope*, he hung on the great Frenchman's quarter, and raked her for long hours till the day broke. Then the *Lion* came up, and waged an unequal fight with the Frenchman. Last of all, the bluff-bowed and lumbering *Foudroyant* arrived on the scene of action; arrived, indeed, in a sort of breathless hurry which well-nigh defeated its own end. "We did not fire a shot till we were within hail," Berry tells Nelson in the excited letter he wrote after the fight was over. There never was a more gallant and obstinate defence than that which the *Guillaume Tell* offered to her assailants. The *Foudroyant*, superior to her in weight of fire, lay broadside on to the Frenchman; the *Lion* hung on her starboard quarter; the *Penelope* raked her bows. Yet the *Guillaume Tell* fought her guns till every spar had gone by the board, and only surrendered long after nightfall, when she was reduced to the condition of a mere shot-torn hulk.

Berry had now practically reached the climax of his career. He hoisted his flag on board a famous

ship, the *Agamemnon*, but he did nothing famous in it. When he was Nelson's flag-captain, and under the spell of Nelson's companionship, he was capable of great things; but when left to himself he somehow seemed to lose all his initiative and more than half his daring. He took part in the great fight of Trafalgar, and it might have been expected that so illustrious a ship as the *Agamemnon*, under Nelson's favourite captain, would have filled a great place in that greatest of sea-battles. This, however, was by no means the case.

On the morning when the combined fleet of the enemy came out of Cadiz the *Agamemnon* had captured a stumpy and heavy-laden merchant brig, had its prize in tow, and was deliberately tugging it into the outstretched arms of the enemy's fleet. Blackwood, in the *Euryalus*, signalled that the enemy was in the north-east, but had to keep firing signal guns for an hour before the stolid *Agamemnon* took any notice. Blackwood's log runs: "Made telegraph signals to the *Agamemnon* that thirty-four of the enemy were out, and to make all sail, and repeat signals between me and the admiral; and that the enemy's ships were much scattered; and directed Sir Edward Berry to fire every ten minutes with the preceding signal; but she still stood on south-east with a brig in tow, when we lost sight of her." Berry that is, was deliberately ignoring signals, and sail-

ing *away from the enemy*. The *Agamemnon* resembled an ant that had captured a beetle, and was dragging its booty, now in one direction and now in another, but determined not to give it up. It was not going to part with its precious beetle for any earthly consideration. To the great fight itself the *Agamemnon* made an absolutely microscopic contribution. The most expressive sentence in the *Agamemnon's* own log of the battle consists in the words "engaging the enemy's ships as most convenient." The killed and wounded on the British side amounted to 1690; to that total the *Agamemnon* contributed exactly ten. Only one other ship in the British fleet—the *Polyphemus*—reported fewer casualties than the *Agamemnon:* it had six killed and wounded. Now, a British 74 that went through the fires of Trafalgar and had only ten of its crew hit must either have been very unfortunately placed or very inefficiently handled. If Nelson had been on the quarterdeck of the *Agamemnon*, with Berry as his flag-captain, it may be assumed with entire certainty that the record would have been very different.

Nelson, in a word, was the head, Berry the hand. And Berry without Nelson was a hand without a brain to direct it.

When, for example, the message came that the *Guillaume Tell* had broken out of Malta, and that the tiny *Penelope* was in pursuit—the flash of her

guns visible in the darkness, but growing fainter every moment—Berry could not realise the situation, nor decide what to do. His angry commodore had to send a hurried and vehement message expressing his "great surprise at the inactivity of the flagship of Lord Nelson" and his "most positive orders" to slip her anchor and go in pursuit of the big Frenchman before Berry stirred. When somebody else told him what to do, then, indeed, Berry did it; and if it was, as in this case, to fight a visible Frenchman, he did it with energy and enjoyment. But he was slow-minded. A problem suddenly presented, unless somebody was on hand to interpret it, puzzled, or even paralysed, him. And war is made up of unexpected problems.

Codrington, it will be remembered, went into the fight at Trafalgar with a fine coolness. Not a gun was fired on board the *Orion* till its particular antagonist was chosen, and the *Orion* almost touching its stern. Then one close and dreadful broadside sent the Frenchman's three masts tumbling and drove her to strike. But as the *Orion*, in disciplined and dreadful silence, moved slowly into the heart of the fight, Codrington gives us a glimpse of "the *Agamemnon* far astern of us, blazing away and wasting her ammunition." That hasty, ineffective fire, planless and blind, gives the measure of Berry's leadership.

Berry was made a baronet; he commanded one of the royal yachts; he attained the rank of rear-admiral; he acquired, that is, a number of ornamental dignities, but he somehow lost both his professional efficiency and his fighting energy. He lived till 1831, but he outlived his faculties. He left no children. His baronetcy became extinct. Berry's career is thus a sort of unfulfilled prophecy. The man who at thirty years of age was the flag-captain of Nelson at the Nile, with seventeen years of war before him, ought to have left an imperishable mark upon history.

Berry's career is a *torso*, because he himself lacked the qualities, not merely of a great, but even of a second-class leader. He does not stand in the same rank with Troubridge, or Saumarez, or Ball. He had merely what may be called the ruder and more primitive qualities of the fighting man: indifference to danger, a joy in the rough and tumble of conflict, a fiery energy in merely physical strife. He was to Nelson what a cutlass is to a boarder—a weapon caught up at the moment of combat, and valued for its power to slay. If Berry was as brave as his own sword, he was, as far as the higher qualities of leadership were concerned, as unintellectual as a sword.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN EDWARD RIOU (1758–1801)

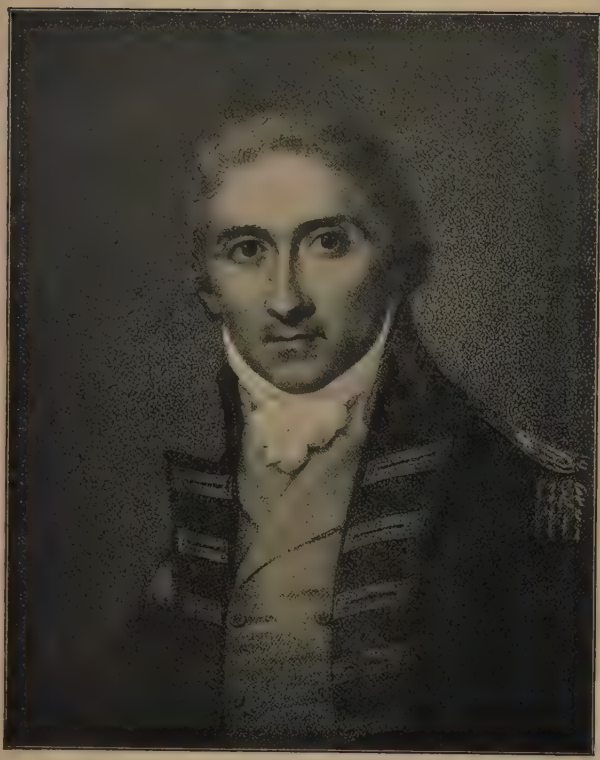
"*Brave hearts! to Britain's pride,*
Once so faithful and so true,
On the deck of fame that died
With the gallant good Riou."
—CAMPBELL'S "BATTLE OF THE BALTIC."

EDWARD RIOU, since his name is embalmed in Campbell's deathless ballad, has won enduring fame; yet he has a better title to be remembered than can be given by even the cadences of a poet's rhyme. Campbell, in fact, borrowed his epithets from Nelson; though, for the sake of melody, he omitted a conjunction. "The gallant and good Riou" is Nelson's phrase. And the parting shot from the great Trekroner battery at Copenhagen, which cut Riou in two, inflicted on the British Navy, in Nelson's judgment, "an irreparable loss." Yet Nelson had only known Riou personally for a few days when he wrote those words. But Riou was emphatically of Nelson's school. Brenton describes him as "having all the qualities that go to make a perfect officer." Certainly Nelson, who read men as if by some wizard's art, found in Riou all the qualities as a seaman and a leader in which he

himself most delighted. And, but for that unhappy shot from a Danish gun, which ended his life too soon, Riou might have shared with Hardy and Blackwood and Berry all the splendours of Nelson's friendship and of Nelson's fame.

Riou possessed all the natural gifts that go to make up a born leader of men. He had a most commanding presence, with an air at once of gravity and of power, rare even amongst Nelson's captains. One spectator, who saw Riou step ashore at the Cape of Good Hope, from the battered hull of the *Guardian*, which, by well-nigh the most heroic feat of seamanship on record, he had brought safe into port, describes him as "the most godlike mortal I ever viewed." His portrait by Shelley is very striking. The eyes are open and frank; the features have an expression of mingled steadfastness and modesty. But the whole face has, with all its nobility and strength, a look of half sad gravity, the seriousness of a man who has looked death in the face a hundred times, and whose daily business it was to contend with all the destructive forces of nature, with ice and storm and darkness—as well as to wage battle with human enemies.

Of Riou's early career curiously little is known. The very year of his birth is doubtful. While yet a middy he joined the *Discovery* under Captain Clerke. Clerke was a seaman trained in the school of exploration. He had been a midshipman under



CAPTAIN EDWARD RIOU

After a miniature by SHELLEY

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Byron in his voyage round the world in 1764–66; he was a master's mate in the *Endeavour* with Cook in his first great voyage of discovery; and second lieutenant of the *Resolution* in Cook's second expedition. When Cook was killed in 1779 Clerke took command in his place. Under such a teacher, and trained in such a school, Riou became a seaman of the finest type, cool, hardy, fearless, and full of resource. It was his unique seamanship, in fact, which gave him his first great chance in life, and is still his most enduring title to fame.

The wreck of the *Guardian* was a very memorable sea disaster, and, in all the records of British seamanship, there is to be found no other example of resource, of exhaustless daring, of the triumph of human courage over the hostile forces of Nature, that outshines the story of how Riou brought the water-logged and battered hull of the *Guardian* into Table Bay.

In August, 1789, the *Guardian*, an old 44-gun ship, but then armed *en flute*, sailed for Botany Bay. She had public stores on board to the value of £70,000, and she carried, besides, a number of convicts, plants, and live stock, seeds and machinery, for the new settlement on the almost unknown shores of New South Wales. The voyage, as far as the Cape, was favourable. There, more stock was taken on board, and yet more plants, until the deck of the ship resembled a combined farmyard and garden.

Just before leaving the Cape, Riou met the hero of another famous sea-disaster, Bligh of the *Bounty*. Bligh was on his road to England, bearing the tidings of the famous mutiny. He had not long before landed from the most memorable boat voyage on record. His mutinous crew had thrust him adrift, with eighteen of his men, in a boat only twenty-three feet long; and in that tiny craft, without a chart, Bligh made a voyage of 3618 miles, till he reached Timor. Bligh had the temper of a devil, but he was a magnificent seaman. Bligh and Riou, indeed, when they met in Table Bay, were perhaps two of the best seamen then in the British Navy. But Riou was one of the most magnanimous and sweet-tempered of men. Like Bligh, Riou could have kept a tiny boat afloat on the open sea for three months; but, had he commanded the *Bounty*, there would have been no mutiny. Riou, as he shook hands with Bligh at parting, little dreamed that he was so near a sea-disaster more tragical and heroic than even that through which Bligh had just passed!

Twelve days after leaving the Cape the *Guardian* sighted a vast iceberg to leeward. Riou ran down till almost under the shadow of the great drifting ice-cliffs, then hove to, and sent his boats to collect broken fragments of the drifting ice. Owing to the number of live stock he had on board, the daily consumption of water was great, and Riou wanted

to fill his fast-emptying casks with ice, which, when melted, would be good drinking water. It was dark by the time the boats returned and were hoisted on board, and the *Guardian* bore away on her course again.

Presently the blackness of the night was made still blacker by a dense and icy fog, which crept through the damp air and over the dark sea. Fog and darkness; and the great iceberg to leeward! But the *Guardian* was on a course which bore right away from peril, and, though a strict watch was kept, there were no apprehensions on the doomed ship. A little before nine o'clock, a curious whiteness that was not exactly light seemed to break through the inky darkness right ahead. Then came a wild cry from the lookout: the *Guardian* was running straight upon the iceberg! The frowning, wall-like mass showed high in the gloom above the topmasts of the imperilled ship.

Riou met the crisis coolly. The helm was put down in a moment, the great ship swung up into the wind and bore clear of the berg, though it seemed as if she would almost graze its outermost jutting point. It turned out that a huge spur of ice, like the darting blade of some Titanic spear, projected from the berg beneath the surface of the sea, and in another moment the great ship crashed on this, and lay, impaled and helpless, while the beetling wall of ice—its summit running up into

darkness till it was lost to sight—seemed to overhang the vessel. A fierce gust of wind just then took the ship, and the unhappy *Guardian* swung round as if on a pivot, and began to drive sternforemost upon the ice. The yards were braced about, however, and presently the ship, with a grating movement, shot off the spur of ice minus her rudder, with torn hull, and shattered cabin-beams. Riou steered his maimed ship by means of the sails till he reached a safe distance from the iceberg, kept her to the wind, and then commenced a struggle for life and death with the sea.

The ship had already two feet of water in the hold, and the leaks were gaining fast. Before midnight, although the pumps were kept going furiously, the water had risen to six feet. A strong gale was blowing, and the sea ran high. All through the night the wounded ship struggled on, sinking deeper every hour. The dawn broke wild and cold, and on a crew already well-nigh exhausted. Riou used all the arts known to seamanship to keep his ship afloat. A sail, with oakum sewn on it in rolls, was passed beneath the bows of the wildly rolling vessel, and for a time this arrested the leaks. But a mere film of canvas was a poor protection for the rent hull. Again and again the sail was worn or torn away, and had to be renewed. All this while the clanking pumps never ceased; the gale blew wilder than ever. Guns and cargo were jet-

tisoned. The crew, frozen with cold and worn out with labour, were almost exhausted. Riou, toiling with a gang of "idlers"—chaplain, purser, &c.—in throwing cargo overboard, had his hand crushed. At six o'clock, when the stormy night fell again, there was, in spite of the utmost exertions of the crew, seven feet of water in the hold!

When the second day broke the *Guardian* seemed lost beyond all hope of recovery. The water had risen to the orlop deck. The sails fluttered as mere rags in the gale. The ship rolled so heavily that the sea, at each roll, came in through the upper deck ports. Men lay about the decks insensible with exposure and labour. The sky was black and stormy. It was Christmas day—a strange Christmas for the unhappy crew of the *Guardian*.

The crew now, for the second time, came aft, and asked that the sinking ship should be abandoned, and the boats launched. If they worked at the pumps much longer, they declared, they would have no strength to keep the boats afloat. The ship was visibly settling down aft; the sea was rushing up the rudder-case. But there were only five boats, and it was impossible to stow 300 persons in them! Riou at last consented that those who chose that desperate chance might betake themselves to the boats; but he would go down with his ship.

The jolly-boat was lowered, struck by a furious sea, and instantly swamped, and its crew—including the ship's surgeon—drowned. The other four boats were safely launched. Then, for a moment, the iron discipline of the ship seemed to fail. Some thirty of the crew leaped into the cutter, and the boat, not yet provisioned, was obliged to push off from the ship's side, to escape being swamped under the weight of jumping men. Riou, at this moment, sat coolly down on the wet and slanting deck, and wrote a letter to the Admiralty, detailing the disaster to his ship, and commending his mother and sister to the public generosity. That letter, described as "one of the most uncommon proofs of fortitude ever written," is still preserved in the Admiralty records, and owing to the courtesy of the Admiralty it is reproduced here:—

Exact copy of letter from Captain Riou, of H.M.S. Guardian; original of which can be found in Volume No. 2395 of "Admiralty Secretary's In Letters," filed at Public Record Office, London.

"*H.M. Guardian, 25th Decr.*, 1789.
"*Lat.* 44 *deg. S.; Long.* 40 *deg. East.*

"*Sir,—If ever any part of the officers or crew of the Guardian should ever survive to get home, I have only to say their conduct after the fatal stroke against an*

W. P. Stephens. Esq

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

Island of Ice was admirable and wonderful in every-thing that related to their duties, considered either as private men or his Majesty's service.

" As there seems to be no possibility of my remaining many hours in this world, I beg leave to recommend to the consideration of the Admiralty a sister, who if my conduct or services should be found deserving any memory, their favour might be shewn to her, together with a widowed mother.

" I am, Sir, remaining with great respect,

" Your ever Obedt. and humble Servt.,

" E. RIOU.

" To P. Stephens, Esq."

The boats then pushed off, leaving Riou a olitary figure on the quarterdeck of the water-ogged *Guardian*. The boatswain, the carpenter, ree midshipmen, and twenty seamen cast in their ot with their heroic captain. And the amazing art of the story is the tale of how, by an almost nexampled struggle, lasting for nine weeks, this andful of gallant men kept the *Guardian* afloat, nd actually brought her into Table Bay !

A cruel fate pursued the boats. The jolly-boat undered in sight of their shipmates. The cutter blown beyond the desolate horizon, and never en again. The launch was picked up by a French ip, after being fourteen days afloat, with her crew the very point of death from exposure and hunger.

It was ten o'clock when the boats left, and the water was two feet above the orlop deck. "We had," as the boatswain records, "two chances—either to pump or sink;" and, being British tars, they chose the pumping, and kept the pumps going till both pumps and men were utterly worn out. Again and again a sail was "fothered" and dragged under the ship's groaning hull. As a matter of fact, the ship was water-logged. Her hull was so torn that her ballast escaped through the rents; but the lower gun deck served as a sort of second bottom. It was of unusual strength, was packed with casks from end to end, and so the complaining hull was just kept from sinking. The scanty crew was able, with the utmost exertions, to keep the ship a few inches above the line at which it must have gone down like a stone. And for nine weeks that dreadful struggle went on! Riou's cool courage and iron will, alone kept his crew to their task. Once they sighted a Dutch packet boat from the Spice Islands, and got some temporary assistance from it. But for the rest the tiny and desperate band had to fight their own battle for life.

A curious account of the wreck survives, written by the boatswain, and is published in the "Historical Records of New South Wales." The boatswain's spelling is that of the forecastle, but through the broken syllables there shines a quite heroic spirit. We reproduce part of this letter:—

"We was about six hundred leagues from any land. There was about fifty-six men missing; a number drowned jumping into the boats; the sea ran so high that the boats could scarce live. The commander had a strong resolution, for he said he would soner go down in the ship than he wold quid hur. All the officers left in the ship is the commander, the carpenter, one midshipman, and myself. After the boats left us we had two chances—either to pump or sink. We cold just yet into the sailroom. We got up a new forecourse and stuck itt full of oakum and rags, and put itt under the ship's bottom; this is called 'fothering' the ship. We found some benefit by itt, for pumping and bailing we gained on hur; that gave us a little hopse of saving our lives. We was in this terable situation for nine weeks, before we got to the Cape of Good Hope. Sometimes our upper deck scuppers was under water outside, and the ship lying like a log on the water, and the sea breaking over hur as if she was a rock in the sea. Sixteen foot of water was the common run for the nine weeks in the hold."

On February 31 the ice-torn, sea-soddened *Guardian* came into Table Bay, to the amazement of mankind. The long-boat had been picked up and had brought the news of what was believed to be the total loss of the ship. No one, indeed, imagined that she could possibly have survived. "Riou himself," wrote one who saw the battered ship come slowly to land, "declares that he knows not in what manner the *Guardian* got here, she being water-logged, and could

not be steered for want of a rudder." As the crew came ashore the same spectator records, "They looked like men from another world—long beards, dirt, and rags covered them." Yet none of Riou's people died during those desperate nine weeks, so contagious was their captain's courage, so vigilant was his care over them. But for himself, as he afterwards declared, he "never permitted himself to hope till the day he sighted land." Now, to wage battle with death for nine stormy weeks without any stimulus of hope, and to carry a look of steadfast cheerfulness in sight of his men for the whole period, was the proof of a courage that must have had the hardness of granite itself!

The troubles of the ill-fated ship, as it happened, did not cease when she reached Table Bay. She was taken into False Bay, to be patched for her voyage to England. While lying there, a furious tempest swept over the bay, and the much-enduring *Guardian*, with no Riou on board to keep her afloat by mere indomitable pluck, sank at her anchor!

The story of the *Guardian*, and of the gallant fashion in which it had been brought safely to port, won instant fame for Riou. The tale of the exploit thrilled England. One somewhat irrelevant detail, it may be added, gained for Riou interest in high quarters. One of his three middies was young Pitt, the only son of Lord Camelford, nephew to the great Lord Chatham. The lad was bent on a sea

career, after a fashion, happily for the race, natural to British lads in every generation, but specially so in the great days of Nelson. His father, in despair, sent him on board the *Guardian*, in the hope that the hardships and perils of the long voyage would cure his passion for the sea. Young Pitt, in the *Guardian*, certainly had crowded into a few weeks, perils and hardships sufficient to have made the sea for ever hateful to him. Then came to England the news of the loss of the *Guardian*, and the whole Pitt connection was troubled. Later arrived the surprising news that the sorely battered ship had struggled safely into Table Bay, and young Pitt was alive! The great Pitt himself drove express, in post-chaise and four, to bear the glad tidings to Lord Camelford; the King was overjoyed. "Something must be done" for the man who had saved the heir of one branch of the Pitts from being ignobly drowned; and Riou, when he reached England, was promoted to the rank of commander, and afterwards to that of captain, hoisting his flag in the *Rose*, frigate, and doing valiant service in her, under Sir John Jervis, in the West Indies. Later he was put in command of the Royal yacht, the *Princess Augusta*, an appointment which he also owed to the gratitude of the Pitts. The *Guardian's* middy, it may be added, remained unconvinced and uncured of his passion for the sea, even by those dreadful nine weeks on the sinking ship. He rose to the rank of commander, but had

a stormy career. He survived more than one court-martial and many duels, and died at last, unwept, under the pistol of an opponent.

Riou, in 1799, exchanged the state and luxury of the Royal yacht for active service, and hoisted his flag on the *Amazon*, a frigate of thirty-eight guns. His ship formed part of the fleet sent, in 1801, to the Baltic, under Sir Hyde Parker, with Nelson as second in command. Nelson, with the swift insight of genius, recognised Riou's fine qualities. Here was a seaman and a fighter after his own heart, with a daring as high, and a sense of duty almost as heroic, as his own. The two men were of the same age, but Nelson was already famous. The glory of St. Vincent and of the Nile clothed him with a sort of nimbus. Riou was but a frigate-captain, with the story of the *Guardian* as his one title to honour. But Nelson drew him instantly into closest comradeship. Riou became, in a sense, his right hand. It was from the quarterdeck of the *Amazon*, with Riou by his side, that Nelson, on the morning of April 1, swept down the long line of the Danish floating batteries, studying the scene of the next day's fight. At one o'clock on that same day the far-stretching line of British seventy-fours went in stately procession up what was called the Dutch Deep towards their enemy, the little *Amazon* leading; and perhaps the proudest man in the whole fleet that day was Riou. He was leading a great fleet, under Nelson, to a sterner

fight than that off Cape St. Vincent, or at the Nile.

At the memorable gathering of the captains in the cabin of the *Elephant* that night, Riou sat, with Foley and Hardy and Fremantle, and many another gallant seaman, as an honoured comrade, little guessing, perhaps, that it was the last night of his life. When the captains had gone back to their ships, and Hardy had crept off through the darkness in a boat, with muffled oars, on the perilous task of taking the soundings along the Danish line, and within a cable's length of the Danish ships, Foley and Riou remained with Nelson, settling the details of the coming fight, and the position each British ship was to take.

It was part of Nelson's plan that his frigates and smaller craft should be under the personal command of Riou, to render any special service which the eddying chances of the great battle might make necessary. They were too light to take their place in the battle line, and be pitted against the heavily-armed floating batteries of the Danes, or against the great Trekroner forts that barred the actual entrance to the harbour. But as the ships moved into the fight along the twisted and muddy channel, and rounded the shoulder of the Middle Ground, the three leading seventy-fours—the *Agamemnon*, the *Bellona*, and the *Russell*—in turn grounded, and in a moment lay helpless. One-fourth of Nelson's

fleet—three seventy-fours out of twelve—were thus suddenly struck out of the coming fight before a shot was fired. Nelson's elaborate and skilful battle plan had gone to pieces.

But a crisis, sudden and apparently desperate, such as this, only calls out the genius of a great leader. Nelson instantly framed a new combination. The places along the line of the floating batteries of the Danes, destined for the stranded ships, were taken by the other seventy-fours, as they came up in succession; and Riou, with his little cluster of frigates — the lightest of twenty-four guns, the heaviest of only thirty-eight—had to face the great Trekroner batteries! These stood on two artificial islands, one with a frowning armament of thirty 24-pounders; the other, still more menacing, carried in its embrasures thirty-eight 36-pounders, while a couple of two-decked block ships added their fire to that of the huge batteries. Riou's frigates, in a word, had to do the work for which as many 74-gun ships would have been scarcely adequate.

Riou, however, took his little squadron into the fight with cool daring, and held them to their post in that hell of fire for two hours and a half. Then came Hyde Parker's unhappy and fiercely-debated signal to "discontinue the action." Nelson, as every one knows, put his glass to his blind eye for the purpose of contemplating the little cluster

of flags fluttering from his admiral's peak, and protested, "I really do not see the signal"! But that flash of grim humour quickly gave place to still grimmer anger. "D— the signal," he cried, "keep mine for closer action flying."

But that ill-fated "No. 39" flying from the distant admiral's peak was the signal of death for Riou. Nelson's ship acknowledged the signal, but did not repeat it. Graves, his second in command, kept the signal for close action flying at the main truck of the *Defiance*, but repeated Parker's ill-omened signal. One of the frigates, the *Alcmene*, saw "No. 39" fluttering from the lee maintopsail yardarm of the *Defiance*, and not only repeated it, but obeyed it. She ceased firing, cut her cable, and stood off out of the fight. The *Blanche* followed next. Riou, in the *Amazon*, kept his post and maintained his fire for another half-hour; and then, almost broken-hearted with grief and anger, he, too, cut his cable and ceased firing.

On all the frigates there was a bitter sense of shame in obeying the signal, a feeling which is reflected in their logs. The *Blanche* says that she only obeyed the signal on the *Amazon* repeating it; the log of the *Amazon* recites how the *Alcmene* and *Blanche* in turn repeated and obeyed the signal, while the *Amazon* only cut her cable after seeing her consorts drifting out of the fight, and "No. 39" still fluttering from the peak of the *London*, the

rear-admiral's ship. Riou, in the *Amazon*, certainly clung to his desperate post in front of the great Danish batteries for some time after the other frigates had drifted out of the fight.

In the sea-fights of that day the smoke of the guns, while the action continued, served as a screen for the ship firing. When Collingwood, at Trafalgar, was leading down under a tempest of shot on Villeneuve's huge and straggling line, he fired a single gun from the forecastle of the *Culloden*, so as to cover the ship with a friendly screen of smoke, and spoil the clearness of their mark for the French. And at Copenhagen, while the *Amazon* kept up her fire, she offered as a target to the huge guns of the Trekroner batteries only a mask of eddying smoke, pricked with incessant points of red flame. When she ceased firing the smoke blew clear of her, and gave the Danish gunners a fair, unsheltered mark. Riou had already been wounded, and, with the bitter exclamation, "What will Nelson think of us?" had given the order to cut the cable and bear out of the fight. Then he sat down on the breach of a gun, faint already from loss of blood. The head of the *Amazon* had swung round, and her stern offered a clear mark to the heavy 36-pounders of the Danish batteries. As the iron hail hurtled along the deck of the *Amazon*, Riou, sitting in its track, was torn almost in two, and fell dead on the deck.

He died not in the exultation of victory, but hen stung with the bitterness of what he thought as defeat. Yet his death was singularly heroic, nd forms one of the most dramatic incidents in ne of the most desperate sea-fights known to istory. It impressed, in a quite curious degree, ie popular imagination. Campbell, with a poet's nstinct, was only condensing into speech the grief nd admiration of a whole people when he gave iou's name a place in his immortal ballad: —

"Let us think of them that sleep
Full many a fathom deep,
By thy wild and stormy steep,
Elsinore!

Brave hearts! to Britain's pride,
Once so faithful and so true,
On the deck of fame that died
With the gallant, good Riou.
Soft sigh the winds of heaven o'er their grave!
While the billow mournful rolls,
And the mermaid's song condoles,
Singing glory to the souls
Of the brave!"

Riou's dying words, "What will Nelson think f us?" show expressively the place Nelson held in ie imagination of the seamen of that day. His raise added a new exultation to victory; his lame—or the mere possibility of his blame—gave new blackness to defeat!

CHAPTER V

SIR HENRY BLACKWOOD (1770–1832)

"*Captain Blackwood has displayed great valour and judgment, and has acquired great renown.*"—LORD ST. VINCENT.

"IS there a sympathy which ties men together in the bonds of friendship without having a personal knowledge of each other? If so (and I believe it was so to you), I was your friend and acquaintance before I saw you." These words were not written by one sentimental and dreamy youth to another, but by an admiral to a frigate-captain—by Nelson, that is, to Blackwood; the most famous seaman and the most terrible fighter the English race has ever produced to a British sailor as yet unknown to fame. The letter is signed "Brontë, Nelson of the Nile," a title to make an English seaman's blood kindle. Blackwood was only the captain of the *Penelope*, a little 36-gun frigate, but he had just performed one of the most audacious feats of seamanship and of daring on record, and Nelson, when he hears the story, forgets his rank, his fame, and all the starched restraints of etiquette, and writes to Blackwood like an admiring boy to some comrade. "Your conduct and character on

SIR HENRY BLACKWOOD

From a mezzotint after J. HOPPNER, R.A., *in the British Museum*

LIBRARY

late glorious occasion," he says, "stamps your
ne beyond the reach of envy. It was like your-
f—it was like the *Penelope*."

Nelson's qualities as a letter-writer have, some-
y, been overlooked. How can it add to the fame
a man who wins great battles that he writes
tty letters? But Nelson's letters are something
re than pretty. They have frankness, ease,
plicity. They are hot-tempered, it is true; they
ssom easily into expletives; they are often fret-
; they abound in conscious and humorous ex-
geration; they reflect the breathless hurry and
ftness of the writer's intellect, as well as the
ce energy of his will. But, above all, they are
erous; and, considering the difference in rank
l fame of the two men, and the fact that they
l never met, what more generous letter was ever
tten than that from Nelson to Blackwood, of
ich we have quoted part. Nelson was ready to
e, not merely to his friendship, but to his very
rt, any one who could do a great and daring
d.

And Blackwood's feat, which made Nelson to the
of his death his ardent friend, was nothing less
n splendid. On March 30, 1800, the *Guillaume*
, of 80 guns, and perhaps the most formidable
ting ship left to carry the French flag, was lying
anchor in Valetta harbour, with a cluster of
tish ships outside watching her, as a committee

of cats might watch a cornered rat. She was the last surviving ship of Brueys' ill-fated fleet at the Nile. She was the flagship of Rear-Admiral Decres; and Decres, for pluck and fighting skill, deserves to be classed with Dupetit Thouars, who, at the Nile, fought the *Tonnant*, with half his body blown away; or with Jean Lucas, who commanded the *Redoutable* in the duel with the *Victory* at Trafalgar, and bore himself in it as bravely as Nelson himself. The *Guillaume Tell* had a crew of over 900 men, and would have been a formidable antagonist for any ship of equal rating under the British flag.

The night of March 30 was black; a strong southerly gale was blowing. A little before midnight Decres slipped his anchor, silently spread his sails and made for the open sea. The great ship showed no light. The gallant Frenchman was making a desperate attempt to break through the blockading squadron and escape, in the hope that he might reach France in safety.

Blackwood, in the *Penelope*, was keeping vigilant watch immediately outside the harbour, in spite of the fierce gale blowing. His lookouts were keen, and presently the great Frenchman, a black, vague gliding mass, dimly visible against the black sky was discovered. The *Guillaume Tell* was escaping Blackwood ran down to an English brig of war near him, hailed her, and sent her off to warn the

Tion, a 60-gun ship, and the *Foudroyant*, of 80 guns, who were anchored under the lee of the land, that the Frenchman had broken out.

But the gale was strong, the night was thick, and, unless touch were kept with the Frenchman, he would certainly escape. Blackwood promptly set off in pursuit, and hung doggedly on the heels of his gigantic enemy. It was a 36-gun frigate pursuing, in spite of night and the gale, a three-decker—a pilot-fish, in a word, attacking a shark! But Blackwood was exactly the man for such a deed. He was as cool as an icicle, as incapable of fear as a sword-blade, and, above all, he was a consummate seaman. He could handle the *Penelope* with the exquisite and perfect skill with which a fine fencer handles his blade.

The frigate, as it happened, was quicker, as well as more agile, than the line-of-battle ship. Blackwood ran boldly down upon his foe—ran down so closely, indeed, that it seemed, in the blackness of the night, as if the jib-boom of the *Penelope* would scrape the stern ports of the Frenchman. Then he luffed, and poured a raking broadside into his adversary's quarter; then bore up, the *Penelope* swinging round like a top, and delivered a second broadside into his adversary's port quarter.

It was a little after midnight when Blackwood fired his first broadside into the great Frenchman, and he kept at that business for the next four

hours, until the grey dawn began to shine in the east. Decres could only answer, and that very uncertainly, with his stern-chasers; and for hour after hour the tormented Frenchman ran on, with the *Penelope*, handled like a yacht, dancing to and fro across his stern. Decres was tempted, again and again, to round-to and crush his little tormentor with a blast of a single broadside; but it may be doubted whether he could have caught his agile foe, and, in any case, the attempt would have lost precious time, and given the heavier British ships a chance of overtaking him. "A hundred times," says Decres in the letter in which he tells the story of that strange night fight to the French Admiralty, "a hundred times I was tempted to manœuvre in order to cripple my pursuer, but, as the wind blew fresh, and I observed, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, several ships at the extremity of the horizon in full sail to support her, I knew that by lying-to I should give them all time to come up, and that my escape was impossible." So Decres sailed doggedly on, whipped incessantly by Blackwood's fire. "We were annoyed," he says, "during the whole night by this frigate, whose fire brought down our main topmast about five in the morning."

As a matter of fact, the fire of the *Penelope* brought down the Frenchman's main and mizzen topmasts, and her mainyardarm; and Blackwood

watched his foe so vigilantly, and manœuvred so cleverly, that his ship hardly sustained any damage, and had only one man killed! That a frigate of 36 guns could fight a line-of-battle ship having 80 guns for five hours, inflicting vast damage and practically suffering none, is an incident it would be difficult to parallel in sea warfare.

A little after five o'clock the first British ship, the *Lion*, a 60-gun vessel, carrying a very weak crew, came up and plunged gallantly into the fight. Its captain, Dixon, steered between the *Penelope* and the much-enduring Frenchman, the space being so narrow that the yardarms of the two ships barely cleared each other. She ran along to larboard of her enemy, pouring in a furious broadside—every gun was loaded with three shot—then luffed up across the Frenchman's bows, the jib-boom of the *Guillaume Tell* actually passing betwixt the main and mizzen shrouds of the British ship. "Close with a Frenchman, out-manœuvre a Russian," was Nelson's axiom; and the *Lion* certainly "closed" with this particular Frenchman in very desperate fashion. "The huge *Guillaume Tell*," as the captain of the *Lion* afterwards described the scene, "appeared of immense bulk, and full of men keeping up a prodigious fire of musketry." The *Lion* showed measureless pluck, but no ingenuity of tactics, in thus closing with its enemy; and in less than an hour the heavier guns of the Frenchman had almost

disabled the British ship. By this time, however, the *Foudroyant*, commanded by Berry, came lumbering up, with every stitch of canvas spread. Berry, an impetuous and hot-headed fighter, overshot his mark. He closed so ardently on the Frenchman that the *Foudroyant's* spare anchor almost caught in the mizzen chains of the *Guillaume Tell*. Berry roared from his quarterdeck an exhortation to "strike," and poured in his broadside at the same moment, by way of emphasising his request; but as his sails were still spread, he shot clean past the Frenchman, and was badly mauled by the heavy guns of the *Guillaume Tell*, while manœuvring clumsily to get alongside his foe again. Berry, in fact, was almost dismasted by the fire of his enemy.

The fight raged for more than two hours; till, at 8.30, the *Guillaume Tell*, rolling an unmanageable hulk in the heavy sea, struck her flag. Even the chilly and unenthusiastic James declares that "a more heroic defence is not to be found amongst the records of naval actions" than that which Decres maintained for so many hours against the three British ships. It is almost amusing to note that neither the *Lion* nor the *Foudroyant* was able to take possession of the surrendered ship. Each of them was almost as much a wreck as the *Guillaume Tell* itself. It was left to the *Penelope*, that had fought longer than either of them, and

against heavier odds, and with hardly any damage, to take possession of the vanquished ship; and the spruce and smart *Penelope* actually towed the shot-torn hull of the big Frenchman in triumph into Syracuse. The prize was finally brought into Portsmouth, repaired, and renamed the *Malta*, and added to the British fleet, the largest two-decker, with one exception, under the British flag. But the gallant Decres himself was the first to acknowledge that he owed his capture to Blackwood's cool courage and masterly seamanship; and these two brave men became friends for life, though fighting under different flags. No wonder such a feat brought fame to Blackwood; it brought in addition what, to a man of his simple and modest character, was more precious than fame, the undying friendship of Nelson.

Blackwood was, in brief, the prince of frigate-captains. He is the only man who twice refused the command of a 74 for mere joy in frigate service, and in the special opportunities of fighting and of distinction that service offered. After the battle of the First of June, he hoisted his flag on the *Nonsuch*, of 64 guns, and exchanged that ship, at his own request, for the *Brilliant*, of 28 guns. Before Trafalgar, Nelson offered him the *Revenge*, one of the finest line-of-battle ships in the navy; but Blackwood preferred the *Euryalus*, a 36-gun frigate. Blackwood's consummate seamanship, his

activity, his gift of initiative and of independent action, found a field for their exercise in frigate service which the quarterdeck of a line-of-battle ship, a mere link in the chain of a fleet, could never have yielded. And it is interesting to note the training which produced so fine and keen a seaman.

Blackwood was of that Scotch-Irish blood which has given the Empire some of its greatest soldiers and sailors and administrators; and he belonged to the same family as the Dufferins. He commenced his sea-life when eleven years old, and spent the whole of his early years as a frigate middy, fighting Dutchmen and Frenchmen. He was signal midshipman on board the *Queen Charlotte*, under Lord Howe; and in the great fight of the First of June was senior lieutenant of the *Invincible*, a ship which played a singularly gallant part in that famous battle. Pakenham, the captain of the *Invincible*, a keen judge of men, detected at once in Blackwood his special quality of thoroughness. "He is," he wrote to the admiral, "as exact, as attentive, as capable an officer as ever I met with." "Your soul is in your business," Nelson wrote to him, long afterwards; and it was that quality of "putting his soul into it" that made Blackwood the perfect seaman he became. It is an illustration of the determination to make the best of himself, which always characterised him,

that, during one of the intervals of peace with France—at the end of 1791—he went to France, being unemployed at the moment, for the sake of mastering the French language. He was in Paris during the September massacres, and was himself arrested, and in deadly peril of his life. He escaped, indeed, only because he so vividly impressed an influential Frenchman with his truthfulness and honour that, at imminent risk to his own life, the generous Frenchman undertook to answer for Blackwood. He gave the first striking proof of his skill and coolness as a seaman while in command of the *Brilliant*, a stumpy little frigate of 28 guns.

On July 26, 1798, the *Brilliant*, in pursuit of a light-heeled French privateer, stood close in to the bay of Santa Cruz. The morning was hazy, the wind light; and Blackwood, as he rounded the entrance to the harbour, saw two powerful French frigates, the *Regenerée* of 40 guns, the *Vertu* of 36, in full sail, coming out of the harbour. Either of the frigates, judging by weight of metal, would have been more than a match for the *Brilliant*, and both of them together were of overpowering strength.

Blackwood instantly bore away to the open sea, spreading every inch of canvas, and cutting away two of his heavy anchors to lighten the head of his ship, and the two Frenchmen followed in eager

and triumphant pursuit. They were swifter than the stumpy little *Brilliant*, and were overtaking her fast. It was the chase of a short-legged bull-terrier by two coursing greyhounds. There seemed to be no hope for the *Brilliant*. She could neither fight her pursuers nor outsail them. Yet Blackwood escaped, with a certain air of triumph, and did it by mere cool seamanship.

It was about five o'clock in the evening, the wind had grown still lighter, and the Frenchmen with their tall sails were coming up fast, the 40-gun *Regenerée* leading. But a greyhound pursuing a bull-terrier runs some uncomfortable risks. Blackwood had cut down the stern of his ship to make room for two 9-pounders, which he mounted to act as stern-chasers; but the Frenchmen, scorning his fire, came on boldly. Blackwood had already, by a sudden and clever change in his course, thrown the Frenchmen a mile to leeward of him, but they were now overtaking him again, and were creeping up past either quarter of him. "The frigate to leeward had reached abreast of my mainmast," says Blackwood; "I bore up athwart his hawse, and raked him so effectually within pistol-shot that in a few minutes I left him with his topsails and topgallantsails down on the caps." The Frenchman's bowsprit was shattered, his foremast badly wounded. The bull-terrier, in brief, had turned on the too eager greyhound and

snapped his nose almost off! Blackwood cheerfully hauled to the wind, and the battered Frenchman, trying too hurriedly to follow that movement, his bowsprit, foremast, and maintopmast went overboard. The other Frenchman was close up on the other quarter of the *Brilliant;* but, discouraged by the rough treatment of its consort, instead of closing on the British ship it shortened sail and bore up in its wake; and, says Blackwood, "I gained so much to windward and ahead that I was very soon out of gunshot."

At midnight, unhappily, the wind failed the *Brilliant* altogether; she lay rolling like a log on the swell, while the two Frenchmen, with damages hastily repaired, were coming up fast, bringing the breeze once more with them. They did not close on the hard-snapping *Brilliant;* but, taking up favourable positions, where not a gun could be brought to bear on themselves, they pelted the helpless *Brilliant* with their broadsides for nearly an hour, firing at her masts in order to cripple her. Presently the breeze reached the *Brilliant;* and, by pure seamanship, Blackwood weathered and fore-reached on his assailants so much that he lost sight of them. The last glimpse showed them discoursing to each other energetically by means of rockets and false fires. As a matter of fact, they were not too eager to follow the indomitable little *Brilliant.* The British ship had been

pursued and bullied through a whole night by two swift frigates, with more than three times her weight of fire; and, after a chase and running fight of more than twelve hours, she shook her enemies off, having inflicted more damage than she suffered! The feat was one calculated to rouse the admiration of all sailors. His own admiral wrote to Blackwood, declaring that, in his judgment, "no more brilliant action was ever achieved." St. Vincent used words at once more sober and more weighty. "Captain Blackwood," he wrote, "has displayed great valour and judgment, and acquired great renown."

In 1803 Blackwood hoisted his flag in the *Euryalus*, of 36 guns, a ship he was destined to make more famous than even the *Brilliant* or the *Penelope*. In 1805 he was cruising in search of the combined French and Spanish fleets, which had broken out from Ferrol, and brushed aside poor Sir Robert Calder, off Cape Finisterre. Blackwood, with that vigilance and skill which never failed him, watched the combined fleets into Cadiz, and then, with every inch of canvas spread, brought the great news to England.

On his way to London with despatches, he passed Merton, where Lord Nelson lived. It was five o'clock in the morning, but Blackwood stopped his chaise and leaped out. "I am sure," said Nelson, when he saw Blackwood's familiar face,

"you bring news of the French and Spanish fleets; and I think I shall yet have to beat them. Depend upon it, Blackwood, I shall yet give Mr. Villeneuve a drubbing."

When Nelson, with the great fleet that was to triumph at Trafalgar, arrived off Cadiz, at the end of September, he put his hand on Blackwood as the man who was to keep watch on the enemy, and serve as eyes and ears to the fleet. Nelson himself, with all his heavy ships, maintained his position twenty leagues to the west of Cadiz. He placed Blackwood in command of a little squadron of five frigates and four sloops; they were to keep ceaseless watch at the entrance to Cadiz harbour. A line of ships connected these with Nelson, twenty leagues distant, and every movement of the enemy was recorded by Blackwood, and flashed down that line of ships to Nelson.

Nothing is more striking than Nelson's confidence in the alertness and vigilance of Blackwood. The two men were curiously unlike each other. Nelson was all fire and fret; Blackwood had the calm temper of a saint, and the gentle eyes of a woman. But the likeness betwixt the two men was even more curious than the unlikeness. "You estimate as I do," wrote Nelson, "the importance of not letting these rogues escape us without a fair fight, which I pant for by day and dream of by night. . . . I am confident you will not let these

gentry slip through our fingers. . . . Watch all points, and all winds and weathers. I shall depend upon you." "I rely on you," he writes the next day, "that we can't miss getting hold of them, and I will give them such a shaking as they have never yet experienced."

On the morning of October 19 there came the fateful signal that "the enemy are coming out of port." On the 20th the report ran that "nearly forty sail of ships of war had been seen outside Cadiz yesterday evening." Nelson, still grimly waiting till his enemies were clear of their port, sent a message down the line of the repeating ships for the *Euryalus:* "I rely on you that I do not miss the enemy." And Blackwood was worthy of Nelson's trust. All that eventful night he hung within half gun-shot distance of the biggest ship in the enemy's fleet, which he guessed to be the flagship. When the morning broke, Blackwood, who, in a sense, was one of the most domestic of men, and found time even among the thunders of Trafalgar to write affectionate and gossiping letters to his wife, wrote to that lady: "At this moment—happy sight—we are within four miles of the enemy, and talking to Lord Nelson by means of Sir H. Popham's signals, though so distant. You see, dearest, I have time to write to you and to assure you that to the latest moment of my breath I shall be as much attached to you as a man can

be. . . . I expect, before this hour to-morrow, to carry General Decres"—whom Blackwood imagined to be in command of the French fleet—"on board the *Victory* in my barge, which I have just painted nicely for him." Here are domestic affection, the rapture of a good fight, and the humorous certainty of taking the French admiral prisoner, all compressed into as many sentences. The British seaman of that day was a very odd compound; and, where the business of fighting Frenchmen was concerned, he always, with confident arithmetic, counted his chickens before they were hatched.

Blackwood played an important and noble—yet what he must have felt to be a highly unsatisfactory—part in the great battle which followed. He was condemned to watch one of the mightiest sea-fights of all history, and to fire not a shot in it! Nelson summoned him on board the *Victory*, and kept him there nearly six hours, only letting him go when the French line began their far-heard broadsides. He put Blackwood in charge of a light squadron, told him the part he expected the frigates to play, and authorised him to give instructions in his name to the rearmost line of battle ships as they came up. Blackwood tried to persuade Nelson to direct the fight from the *Euryalus*, instead of plunging personally into the heart of it on the quarterdeck of the *Victory*, a proposal which Nelson answered with a smile. As the two friends

parted, Blackwood expressed the hope that before nightfall Nelson would be in possession of twenty prizes. "God bless you, Blackwood," was Nelson's reply; "I shall never see you more." So sure was the great seaman that this was his last fight; yet so unshaken was his courage by that tragical premonition.

Blackwood watched the battle of the Titans from the quarterdeck of the *Euryalus*, with such a passion of interest as may be guessed. Late in the fight the *Royal Sovereign*, Collingwood's ship, being almost dismasted, summoned the *Euryalus* by signal to its help. "I went down among them all," writes Blackwood to his wife, "and took the *Royal Sovereign* in tow, which enabled him to keep his broadside upon the enemy; all of this without firing a shot from the *Euryalus*, which was difficult to prevent. But had I permitted it, I could not have performed the service." After the fight, Collingwood shifted his flag to the *Euryalus*, and that diligent vessel towed the huge and shot-torn hull of the *Royal Sovereign* clear of the smoke to the eastward. For ten days Collingwood's flag, as commander-in-chief, flew from the peak of the *Euryalus*, and Collingwood himself wrote to Blackwood afterwards: "I consider it a material part of my good fortune that I embarked in your ship." Blackwood thus saw more of the battle of Trafalgar, and of the days that followed, when the two battered fleets—

victors and vanquished—were fighting for life against the dreadful gale, than any other person; and there are few versions of Trafalgar at once more picturesque and pathetic, as well as unconsciously amusing, than that which Blackwood gives day by day in his letters to his wife.

If he was as eager to thrash the Frenchmen as Nelson, at least he was more just to them than Nelson usually was. "The enemy," he writes, "awaited the attack of the British with coolness, and they fought in a way that must do them honour. As a spectator who saw all that was done on both sides, I must ever do them the justice to say this . . . though I have always given them more credit for vigour of determination than most others."

Blackwood's picture of the fatal gale which followed Trafalgar, and blew into mere space the trophies of the great fight, is very graphic. On Friday, the 25th, he writes: "All yesterday and last night the majority of the English fleet have been in the most perilous state, our ships much crippled with dismasted prizes in tow, our crews tired out, and many thousands of prisoners to guard—all to be done with a gale of wind blowing us right on the shore. . . . The melancholy sights we experienced yesterday of ships driven on shore, others burning, and the rest that we have been forced to sink, after withdrawing as many men

as we could for fear of their again falling into the hands of the enemy, cannot be described. Close to the port of Cadiz I had to destroy the *Santissima Trinidada*, a Spanish ship of 100 guns. . . . The French commander-in-chief, Villeneuve, is at this moment at my elbow . . . his despair and astonishment at so many having fallen cannot be easily conceived."

Blackwood remained always a consummate seaman and commander, and perhaps the most universally beloved man in the navy; but his luck failed, and the interest in his career grows faint after he ceased to be a frigate-captain. After Trafalgar he was appointed to the *Ajax*, of 80 guns, and brought his ship and crew up to the highest point of fighting efficiency. The *Ajax* formed one of the squadrons which, in 1803, forced the Dardanelles, to destroy the Turkish fleet at Constantinople. On the night of February 14, while the squadron lay at anchor off the Dardanelles waiting for a fair wind for the straits, the *Ajax* took fire. She was an old ship, sun-dried in every timber, and she burned like a match-box. "She was burnt," wrote Blackwood to his wife, "in the most extraordinary rapid way that I believe was ever witnessed. From the moment of alarm, exactly at nine o'clock, when all (except sentinels and those on watch) were in bed, till she was in flames from the main to the mizzen rigging, sails and all, did not

exceed twenty minutes." The flame broke out in the bread-room, and the ship was almost at once enveloped in a smoke so thick and choking that the officers and men on the upper deck could only discover each other by touch. Then the flames burst, red and furious, up the main hatchway, dividing the fore part of the ship from the after part. Blackwood's story, as written to his wife, is very interesting :—

"At the first alarm of fire I beat to quarters, and an ocean of water was soon turned in; but before I could reach the bread-room, where the origin lay, the fire had gained such head we were all obliged to retreat. I succeeded in drowning the magazine, and another attempt was made, till the men fell with the buckets in their hands. Before I could reach the quarterdeck the flames burst out of the hatchway; I therefore found all attempts to get boats hoisted out useless, and I desired all about me—whom I could only feel in the smoke and not see—to save themselves as well as they could; when all pushed for the head of the ship, which, being to windward, was the safest. I stood on the gangway till the crowd was out of the way, and exhorted every one to keep by the ship till the last moment, that boats might have time to come. I then walked to the forecastle, always keeping an eye on the progress of the flames; but in going forward, not seeing my way, down I fell into the main deck. . . . Suffocated people lay all

round. I soon gained the forecastle, where I stood for some time till forced farther forward. Here, when on the bowsprit, all was dreadful as is possible to be conceived; the cries of the people, increased by the progress of the fire, particularly amongst those who could not swim, cannot be described. I now got on to the spritsail yard, determined to wait there till the last moment, but soon it became too heavy, and I saw we must all go into the water together, which would have been certain destruction; added to which everybody became clamorous that I should save myself. Therefore, after a few minutes more, overboard I went. . . ."

Here the domesticated side of Blackwood emerges, and, at this stage of his narrative, he interposes an elaborate compliment to his wife. "Overboard I went," he continues, "with a heart as much devoted to so dear a wife as ever man's was, and with the fullest sense of all her excellent and superior good qualities! I never thought I should be lost. When I had been in the water about half-an-hour, looking at my unfortunate ship, I fell in with an oar from which some poor fellow had been parted. I clung to it; and, though much exhausted, not dismayed in my hopes of safety." Here comes another compliment to his wife: "My heart and head always turned to embracing you again, and which, I am persuaded, aided me in supporting myself." Domestic affection, in a word,

acted as a sort of patent buoy. "In about a quarter of an hour more," he proceeds:—

"*I fell in with one of the* Canopus' *boats. They pulled me in with difficulty, and, after a long row, which was worse for being so chilled with the water, with a cold north-east wind, having escaped one death, all thought I had found another. I was carried on board Sir Thomas Louis' ship, where I was laid in hot blankets, &c., as unhappy and broken-hearted as a man can be. . . . Having only a shirt and flannel waistcoat on when I jumped over, you can conceive I had to levy contributions, and am now rigged out in a most extraordinary way.*"

The burning *Ajax* drifted on the island of Tenedos, where she exploded. Of her crew and officers, no less than 250 perished. "So fine a ship!" writes poor Blackwood, "in so good a state for any service, a crew I had been taking such pains to form—how shall I ever be able to get the better of it, when I recollect how many gallant officers and men, as well as the boys, I had under me were all hurried in so dreadful a way into eternity?" The gunner of the ship, who had two sons on board, threw one of them into the sea, where he was picked up by a boat; but the desperate father himself, going below to seek his other son, perished in the flames. Blackwood had

one much-cherished protégé on board, Lieutenant Sibthorpe, who had been one of his middies in the *Brilliant*. "Poor Sibthorpe," writes Blackwood, "as we both jumped overboard I took leave, and begged he would keep as near to me as he could. But from the moment he touched the water I never saw him more." Three women were on board the doomed *Ajax;* two perished, but the third escaped by following her husband, with a child in his arms, down a rope from the jib-boom end. Blackwood was honourably acquitted from all blame for the loss of his ship; but to the very end of his life the tragedy of that wild night when the *Ajax* perished cast a shadow over him.

It is needless to pursue Blackwood's career further. He rose to the rank of rear-admiral, was made a baronet, and flew his flag as commander-in-chief in the East Indies. He died in 1832—only sixty-two years of age—after a career crowded with great events and rich in splendid services. Amongst all the seamen of that stormy age Blackwood stands high, not only for professional skill and cool daring, but for a modesty, a sweetness of temper, and an unselfishness rarely found in combination with the hardihood and the audacious valour which mark the seamen of Nelson's school.

CHAPTER VI

SIR THOMAS TROUBRIDGE (1758–1807)

"*Look at Troubridge! He tacks his ship to battle as if the eyes of all England were on him; and would to God they were!*"—SIR JOHN JERVIS AT THE BATTLE OF CAPE ST. VINCENT.

"*It was Troubridge whom I left as myself at Naples; he is, as a friend and an officer, a nonpareil.*"—NELSON.

WHO, amongst the sailors of that great age, comes in popular estimation next to Nelson for seamanship, for fighting quality, and for gifts of leadership? It is, for many at least, not Collingwood, who, at Trafalgar, led the weather-column down in fashion so proud on the enemy's battle-line. Not Foley, who held the pride of place in the onfall at the Nile, and rounded, with such high daring, the head of Brueys' line. Not the veteran Saumarez, nor the gigantic Hallowell, nor Miller, nor Hood, nor Codrington, nor Berry, nor Hardy. It is Troubridge! Round Troubridge and the *Culloden*—man and ship—hang traditions scarcely less heroic than those which have given imperishable fame to Anson and the *Centurion*, or to Nelson and the *Victory*.

There is a curious contrast in personal appearance betwixt Nelson and Troubridge. Nelson, measured by inches, was insignificant; one-armed, one-eyed, fretful, vehement. Troubridge took the admiring eye captive by his mere presence. He was of noble stature and build, with a fine stateliness of bearing. His face, with its widely open, lifted eyebrows, its clear lines, its massive brow, bore the stamp at once of frankness and of power. Troubridge was one of the best seamen in an age when British seamanship had reached its highest point, and when British sailors, trained and hardened by the great blockades and the interminable cruises of the period, were almost as much at home on the sea as the sea-gulls themselves. But he was no mere sea-dog such as Smollett drew, with sea-brine in his blood and sea-roughness in his manner. He was educated at St. Paul's School, London; he became a man of affairs, a diplomatist, an administrator. St. Vincent, shrewdest of men, with a genius for picking fit instruments, took Troubridge with him to the Admiralty when he became First Lord; and Troubridge showed qualities as fine at the council table in Whitehall as he did on the quarterdeck of the *Culloden*. He perished with all his crew in a cyclone off Madagascar when he was not yet fifty years of age, and as he never commanded a fleet in a general engagement, he had no opportunity of

SIR THOMAS TROUBRIDGE, Bart.

From an engraving after the portrait by Sir William Beechey, R.A.

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proving that he possessed the highest gifts of leadership. So his career, though crowded with fine achievements, is incomplete. But, next to Nelson, scarcely any other sailor in that age of great seamen gives so vividly the sense of capacity for great things.

Troubridge was a Londoner, born in 1758, the same year with Nelson. Like Nelson, he began his sea life by a voyage to the West Indies in a merchant ship, with the rough forecastle for his first school of seamanship. He was entered as an able seaman, though only fifteen years old, on the *Sea Horse*, in 1773. Nelson joined the *Sea Horse* a few days after Troubridge, and thus, by a happy chance, the two lads who, twenty-four years afterwards, in command—one of the *Culloden*, and the other of the *Captain*—were to wreck the Spanish van at Cape St. Vincent, began their naval career in the same gunroom. A frigate that counted Nelson and Troubridge amongst its middies had surely a quite singular good fortune! And the loitering imagination is tempted to speculate, half-humorously, on the problem of what sort of middies—much more, it may be suspected, of the Peter Simple than of the Jack Easy type—this particular pair of lads were. The middies of those rough days had not much, as we have seen, of scientific training, but they were drilled in all the practical business of seamanship with a thoroughness which no naval academy or mere "training-ship"

could impart. They were days of hard work and living; of rough manners, of stern discipline, of long, monotonous cruises. The system killed off weak men, but it had the office of a tonic for the enterprising and the hardy. It tempered them as steel is tempered, and to the hardness of steel.

In 1780 Troubridge, by this time master's mate, was transferred to the *Superb*, the flagship of Sir Edward Hughes, and took part in the stubborn, indecisive, long-drawn-out combats in Indian waters betwixt that admiral and Suffren. Suffren, perhaps, was the finest sailor under the French flag of that period. There was in him a gleam, at least, of Nelson's own swiftness, resource, and audacious courage. Had he commanded at the Nile instead of Brueys, or at Trafalgar instead of Villeneuve, the final result of those great fights might not have been different; but Nelson's task would have been incomparably harder, and the British must have paid a vastly higher price for their victory. Hughes was a sea-dog of the old school, with all the merits, and the defects, of his type. He was a most stubborn fighter; but he was old and slow. His sole idea of sea strategy was to lay his ship alongside that of his opponent, and fight his guns till his foe struck, or his own ship went down. Suffren was ill-served by his captains, but he out-manœuvred and out-sailed Hughes hopelessly, if he could not out-fight him; and he

showed a quickness and resource in repairing the damages of each conflict which Nelson himself might have envied, and which left the heavy-footed Hughes hopelessly behind. From February 1782 to June 1783 — for more than fifteen months, that is—Suffren and Hughes manœuvred and contended with each other for supremacy in Indian waters; and during that period they fought no less than five general engagements. It was a fine school for Troubridge, who, by this time, was second lieutenant in Hughes' flagship; but Troubridge's best instructor was, no doubt, the brilliant and agile Frenchman himself.

At the beginning of 1783, Troubridge, only twenty-five years old, obtained post rank, and hoisted his flag on the *Active* frigate. He came home as flag-captain with Hughes in 1785, went on half-pay when peace came, got married, and spent the years betwixt 1785–90 in that peaceful country life for which a sailor always longs, and with which a sailor is never satisfied. In 1793 war betwixt France and England broke out again, and Troubridge, now in command of the *Castor*, a 32-gun frigate, sailed as convoy to the Newfoundland fleet. No worse fate, apparently, can befall a sailor than that of being captured by the enemy at the beginning of a long war, and this misfortune overtook Troubridge.

He and his convoy were becalmed off Cape

Clear, the ships swinging lazily to the lazy swell, when the British lookouts discovered the topsails of half-a-dozen big ships fretting the skyline, and plainly bringing the breeze with them. It was a division of the Brest fleet under Admiral Nielly. The *Castor* could not escape, and it could not fight an entire squadron of line-of-battle ships. Troubridge, with a disgust too deep for expletives, had to haul down his flag, and found himself, with the fifty men of his crew, packed in the gloomy depths of the *Sanspareil* as prisoners of war.

This was on May 13, and the incident seemed to bring Troubridge's naval career to an inglorious close. As a matter of fact, this very "disaster" was, for Troubridge, the happiest stroke of good fortune. Nielly received orders to join Villaret-Joyeuse, who was guarding the track of the great convoy from America; and within a fortnight from Troubridge's capture, he was looking over the tall bulwarks of the *Sanspareil* with longing eyes at the spectacle of Lord Howe's fleet, with bellying sails, trying to fore-reach on Villaret-Joyeuse's great ships. On June 1, in the grey dawn, Howe had got well to windward of his foe, and could compel the Frenchman to fight. Instead of bearing down at once, however, the British ships hauled off; and on board the *Sanspareil* the French officers expended much exultant sea-wit at the expense of Lord Howe, on Troubridge. His quick and

trained eye, however, had seen the breakfast pennant flying from the topmast of the *Queen Charlotte*, Howe's flagship. That wary old admiral was giving his crews a good meal before he closed on his enemy in battle; and Troubridge told the jesting Frenchmen that they would have "a belly-ful of fighting" before the day was over.

As the hostile lines drew near each other Troubridge was sent below, and had to listen while sea and ship were shaken with the sound of quick-following and mighty broadsides. The *Sanspareil* fared ill in the fight. The *Glory*, a British ship of 98 guns, smote it with a dreadful fire, and later the *Majestic* added her broadsides to the iron hail by which the Frenchman was being shattered. Troubridge listened—with what feelings may be imagined—to all the tumult of the fight. His seaman's ear could interpret the meaning of the various pulses of mighty sound. He heard the foremast of the *Sanspareil* tumble in thunder on to the deck above him. The mainmast went next. Troubridge was himself leaning against the mainmast at that exact moment; as the roar of another broadside swept over the ship he felt the mast quiver violently to the stroke of the rushing iron; the next moment followed the crash of the falling mast as it went by the board. Troubridge was almost thrown down by the shock. Recovering his balance, he

sprang upon the astonished sentry, half-embraced and half-strangled him, flung him aside, raced on deck, and saw at a glance the whole landscape of the great fight. The British were triumphant. On every side French ships—mere mastless hulks—were rolling in the swell. From the stern of the *Sanspareil* itself the Union Jack was fluttering. The Frenchman had struck. With what a tumult of excited gladness Troubridge shook the hand of the lieutenant of the *Majestic*, who first clambered over the broken bulwarks of the *Sanspareil* to take possession of it, can be imagined.

Howe had no officers to spare, and he put Troubridge in command of the prize. This was turning the tables with a vengeance, and Troubridge, who a few weeks before had left port in command of a 32-gun frigate on ignoble convoy duty, came proudly back into Spithead in command of perhaps the finest three-decker in the French navy as a prize. The *Sanspareil*, measured by tonnage, and when compared with modern ships, may not seem very great. She was a ship of only 2242 tons. But she was one of the largest ships then afloat, and carried a complement of 814 men, of whom, by the way, no less than 380 were killed or wounded by the broadsides of the *Glory*. Troubridge was at once appointed to the *Culloden*, the ship with which he was to win a long-enduring fame.

Troubridge's first experience in the *Culloden* were not of a very brilliant character. He was attached to the Channel fleet, from thence he was transferred to the Mediterranean, and took part under Hotham in the action off Hyères on July 14, 1795. Hotham took his fleet into action in bad order and with a divided mind, and drew off just when reasonable success was in sight. It was not a battle, but a scratching match. The total loss of the British fleet amounted to eleven killed and twenty-seven wounded. Troubridge contrived to get more than his fair share of the wretched fight, and the *Culloden* lost a mast; but the engagement off Hyères is a very excellent example of all that a sea-fight ought not to be. Hotham was certainly hampered by old and slow ships, the oldest and slowest being the *Britannia*, from which his own flag flew. But he himself was slower, if not older, than the worst ship in his fleet.

Troubridge now came under the flag of Jervis, who was in command of the Mediterranean, and was training that fine fleet—perhaps the finest that ever flew the blood-red flag of England—which was afterwards to win the memorable fight off Cape St. Vincent. Jervis was the grimmest of men, and had an amazing economy in compliments; but he had a great commander's gift for choosing fit instruments, and he quickly realised Troubridge's fine qualities. "His merits," he wrote in one

despatch, "are very uncommon." Of the manner in which Troubridge performed a bit of work entrusted to him, he wrote again: "I do not recollect an instance of greater vigour and despatch." When blockading Toulon, Jervis gave Troubridge the command of the light squadron watching the very mouth of the harbour, while the heavy ships kept in the offing. He records that Troubridge "keeps the batteries in a continual blaze." In Jervis' fleet the whole standard of discipline, order, and fighting efficiency steadily rose, and no ship was a more perfect instrument of battle, perhaps, than the *Culloden* under Troubridge.

One striking proof of Troubridge's resource and seamanship belongs to this period. Just before the great fight, two British line-of-battle ships, the *Colossus* and the *Culloden*, managed to run into each other. It was the morning of February 12; the night still black, the sea rough. The *Colossus* kept her wind too long, so that the *Culloden* had to bear up in order to clear her; the *Colossus* suddenly bore up too, and the two great ships crashed into each other. The *Culloden* was reduced to a state of semi-wreck; her jib-boom and foretop-gallant-mast were wholly carried away; her "nose" was smashed, and her bowsprit badly sprung. The damage would have sent any ship under an ordinary captain into port for repairs. But the Spanish fleet was somewhere to windward, and Troubridge, with the

whisper of a great coming battle already creeping over the sea, was not the man to give up his place in the fighting line for any argument short of actual shipwreck. He sternly enforced order on the *Culloden*, set all hands to work, and pushed on the repairs with admirable system and energy. When the day broke the ship still looked half dismantled, but by the afternoon of the same day Troubridge reported her "ready for action," and she was actually sent ahead as an outlook. So, from the very disaster of the foul with the *Colossus*, Troubridge, by the magic of his energy and seamanship, won the great chance of his life. He led the British fleet into action at Cape St. Vincent.

The Spaniards were running an eastward course for Cadiz; Jervis' course, slightly west of south, was almost perpendicular to that of the Spaniards; and exactly where the leading ship, the *Culloden*, struck the Spanish line, there was a wide gap. Jervis' plan was to go about as soon as his main body had passed through this gap, and his van to attack the windward division of the Spanish fleet, while his rear forbade the leeward division of the Spaniards to come to the assistance of their comrades.

When leading through the gap Troubridge held on his course with unswerving resolution, and it seemed probable that he would run actually foul

of the last ship in the windward division of the Spanish fleet — a huge three-decker. His first lieutenant, with some concern, drew his captain's attention to the threatened collision. "Can't help it, Griffiths," was Troubridge's reply; "let the weakest fend off!" And the *Culloden* stood on till, through the huge square ports in the Spaniard's side, the eager British seamen could see the crews of the Spanish guns at their quarters ready to fire. But Troubridge was quick, and the Spaniard slow; and the great three-decker could only answer with an agitated splutter of guns the two dreadful double-shotted broadsides, "fired as if by a seconds'-watch," with which Troubridge smote her. The great Spaniard reeled under the stroke of those broadsides. The business of stopping the *Culloden* was too much for her, and she left the gap clear for the Englishman.

Troubridge led magnificently. He was watching for the expected signal to tack so keenly, that the moment the little black balls showed above the flagship's netting, the *Culloden* went round like a top. "Look at Troubridge!" cried the delighted admiral. "He takes his ship to battle as though the eyes of all England were upon him; and would to God they were!"

But as the British fleet, link by link, swept through the gap and bore up, it left the sea clear in its rear; and the leading ships in the

Spanish windward division suddenly tacked and came with bellying sails down before the wind, with the design of passing Jervis' rear and joining their leeward ships. Nelson, who, in the *Captain*, was almost the last — the thirteenth — ship in Jervis' line, caught the sudden change in the course of the Spaniards. He read with the keen vision of a great commander the design of the Spanish admiral, the peril of it, the way to defeat it. He put the *Captain* about and bore up—a single ship against a fleet!—in the track of the on-coming Spanish flagship, a huge four-decker, with its sister-giants. Troubridge from the head of Jervis' line, and Nelson from its rear, thus struck almost simultaneously into the heart of the Spanish fleet. Of Nelson's part in the fight, in which a single 74 had to endure for a time the fire of five ships—one of them of 130 guns and two of 112 guns—there is no need to give any account here. The *Captain* was quickly reduced to the condition of a wreck, but it had done its work. It had stayed the rush of the Spanish van; and, when the fight with its tumult moved off, Nelson, by way of postscript to the story, boarded and carried the *San Nicolas* and the *San Josef* of 112 guns.

When writing the story afterwards, Nelson records: "I was immediately joined and most nobly supported by the *Culloden* under Captain Trou-

bridge." How Troubridge came into the fray, and how he bore himself in it, is, indeed, a gallant tale, which we have no time to tell. The *Culloden* was reduced to almost as battered a condition as the *Captain;* her masts and hull were pierced through and through with Spanish shot; five of her guns were dismounted, fifty-seven of her crew killed or wounded. It is a proof of Troubridge's fighting energy that in that comparatively brief period of the fight he expended no less than 170 barrels of gunpowder on his enemies. How a kindling story can be translated into a drab-coloured and limping prose may be judged from the record of this great fight in the *Culloden's* log:—

"11.30, began to engage. Set the foresail, main-topmast staysail, and mainsail. Tacked ship in chase of the enemy. . . . 12.45, began the action again. Shortened sail, being abreast of one three-decker and one 74-gun, and one three-decker on our larboard bow. The *Blenheim* on our larboard quarter without his foresail set, and backing his mizzen-topsail occasionally, distance about half a cable's length. Found the jibstay, halliards, and all the rigging about the jib-booms shot to pieces, by which we lost the jib and part of the gear. . . . Observed one of the enemy's line-of-battle ships strike to the *Excellent.* 3.5, observed the Spanish admiral's ship much damaged and very much disabled. 3.37, observed the *Captain* boarded

two of the line-of-battle ships and hauled down their colours. 4.40, the action ceased. After the action ceased found the foremast, mainmast, main-yard, maintopmast, spritsail yard, main and mizzen-topgallant-mast, studdingsail booms and spare main-topmast and spars on the boom shot through; the sails, standing and running rigging very much cut. A number of shots through the sides above and below water. Ship very leaky from the shot under water, which kept two chain-pumps going. Employed knotting and splicing the rigging and setting the topsails. Carpenters fishing the main-yard."

The attack on Santa Cruz was the one dramatic failure in Nelson's sea career; it is the one incident, too, in which Troubridge comes under the charge of failure. It might seem, at first, as if the dash on Santa Cruz ought to have succeeded. Nelson was in command; Hood, Fremantle, Bowen, and Troubridge were amongst his captains. The sailors were the men of Cape St. Vincent. But Nelson was refused the troops he needed for the land attack, and the very nature of the coast—with its rocky, unsheltered beach, its furious breakers, its sudden gusts of wind—made a boat-landing almost impossible. The Spaniards had 8000 troops with forty guns in the town, and were keenly alert. The attempt failed; and, though it sounds like a paradox, it would probably have succeeded if

Nelson had been, not first in command, but only second! In that case he would have commanded the first landing party, and would certainly have seized the hills which overlooked the forts, and made a dash on the forts themselves. As it happened, Troubridge commanded the landing party. He had 1000 seamen under his command; but with such a force to assault heavily armed forts held by 8000 Spaniards and forty guns, seemed madness. Troubridge would have faced such odds on the quarterdeck of the *Culloden;* but his genius seemed to suffer a chill in land warfare. He abandoned the attempt, and re-embarked his men. "Had I been of the first party," Nelson said afterwards, "I have reason to believe complete success would have crowned our endeavours." Nelson led the second attack in person; but he did it because he could not endure the ignominy of giving up the expedition without having fired a shot. As he said afterwards, "I never expected to return."

The night attack on Santa Cruz was, indeed, one of the most gallant feats ever attempted in war; and Troubridge's part in it is almost absurd in its audacious daring. Nelson himself was shot in the very act of leaping on the mole, and was carried back desperately wounded to his ship. Out of the whole expedition, flung in darkness on that wild shore, under the flames of the Spanish guns, only some 300 men under Troubridge succeeded in

scrambling out of the surf, to land half drowned and with their ammunition spoiled. Troubridge took his men forward; the mole was carried, with the fort covering it, and Troubridge and his bedraggled bluejackets fought their way to the appointed rendezvous, the great square of the town.

Here was a handful of British sailors, with ammunition useless and retreat cut off, in the heart of a hostile town held by 8000 troops! Troubridge sent a man forward to demand the immediate surrender of the citadel. When this was refused and his messenger shot, he then attempted to carry the citadel by storm. When this, in turn, failed, he sent forward a flag of truce declaring that he would burn the town if he was not allowed to march off unmolested. The Spaniards received this message with an impulse of almost pious gratitude. To get rid of such disquieting visitors on any terms was delightful. Troubridge marched off and re-embarked, having at least shown for how much resolution counts in war. He had no powder, no provisions, no boats, only his own unquenchable daring. Mahan says that Troubridge's failure to attack on the first landing showed that he lacked a true genius for command, the capacity for taking a great decision such as Nelson showed at Cape St. Vincent; and he concludes that though invaluable as a subordinate he was not equal to the responsibility of supreme command. But

not Nelson himself could have shown a higher degree of coolness and audacity than Troubridge showed in bringing off his men from the great square of Santa Cruz.

Troubridge next makes his appearance in the great drama of the Nile. He was Nelson's right hand, the most eager and most trusted of all his captains, in the fierce and memorable pursuit of Brueys—perhaps the most wonderful sea-chase in history. When, late on August 1, 1798, the naked topmasts of the French ships, showing like a fringe of lances against the sky, were seen across the low shores of Aboukir Bay, the *Culloden*—with all its terrible fighting power, a slow ship—was far astern, its natural slowness increased by the circumstance that it was towing a prize. The prize was at once cast loose and every inch of canvas spread. But the wind was light, the sun was sinking, and the *Culloden* was still far off in the offing when, at a quarter past six o'clock, Foley, in the *Goliath*, rounded the head of the French line and poured his broadside—the opening note in the stormy chorus of the battle—into the bows of the *Guerrier*. The crew of the *Culloden* caught the deep and rolling sound of that first broadside as it swept over sea and land; but it was dark before the *Culloden* put her helm down to round the tail of the Becquiéres shoal, and

take its place in the fighting line. Before him, a dancing scribble of flame on the blackness, Troubridge could see the broadsides of the contending ships. The long tail of Brueys' line was unlit by any flash of guns, but on his centre and van, like a vast pair of flaming nut-crackers, the double line of British ships was closing.

How the *Culloden*, with its perfect discipline and formidable broadsides, would have borne itself in that battle of giants may be guessed. But at that moment the great ship grounded heavily on a projecting spur of the shoal, and the suddenly arrested hull leaned over to the pressure of the wind-filled sails till the ship lay almost on its beam ends.

The hours that followed were perhaps the blackest in Troubridge's life. The long sea-chase had reached its climax. His brother-captains, with Nelson, were closing on the Frenchmen. Land and sea were trembling to the thunder of their guns. Troubridge could see and hear it all, but he could not share it. His ship was hopelessly aground.

The *Leander* hailed through the darkness to know if she could render any help, and sent a boat on board the stranded ship to learn the condition of affairs. But Troubridge was too generous a man, as well as too good a captain, to keep a comrade out of the fight, and he told Thompson,

the commander of the *Leander*, "to lose no time in joining in the fleet." Tradition has it that twice during that dreadful night, distracted beyond endurance by finding himself on the fiery edge of a battle in which he could not join, Troubridge contemplated—or attempted—suicide. But the tradition may be dismissed as a fable. Troubridge bore himself during the long hours the *Culloden* was stranded like the perfect seaman he was. He launched his boats and took soundings all round the ship; carried out a stream anchor into deep water, and hove upon it with the whole strength of his crew. He jettisoned a vast amount of stores and provisions, started the wine into the coal-hole, threw the empty wine pipes overboard, &c. The swell by this time was growing fiercer, the ship struck heavily again and again. Its rudder was carried away. The water was pouring into the torn hull, and rose five feet per hour. At three o'clock the next day the sorely wounded ship was dragged off the reef, and then the water was rising at the rate of seven feet per hour, and every available hand was at the pumps. Perhaps only Troubridge could have kept the shattered *Culloden* afloat. A sail was thrummed and passed beneath the hull; a rudder was improvised out of a spare topmast. "Troubridge saved the *Culloden*," wrote Nelson afterwards, "when none that I know in the service

would have attempted it." Troubridge, in fact, patched up the *Culloden* sufficiently to be able to take her to Naples, where she was refitted.

With what generous indignation Nelson protested against Troubridge and the *Culloden* being left out of the honours granted to the victors of the Nile is matter of history. He considered Troubridge had suffered enough by being kept out of the fight. He had been condemned to see his comrades "in the full tide of happiness"—engaged, that is, in a life and death struggle with their natural enemies the French—while he himself was denied any share of that bliss! "For heaven's sake, for my sake," he pleaded with Lord St. Vincent that Troubridge should be equally honoured with his other captains; and by special favour of the King the gold medal of the Nile was granted to him. But Troubridge always looked back on those nine hours during which the *Culloden* was thumping on the Becquiéres shoal in sight of the great battle as the most unhappy hours of his life.

From the Nile to the end of 1800 Troubridge spent mainly in Italian waters. These were the dark years of Nelson's life; years in which he came under the influence of that somewhat over-plump beauty, Lady Hamilton; and the great sailor showed he possessed some, at least, of a sailor's characteristic simplicity and softness where the sex is concerned.

But while Nelson was breathing the enervating airs of the Neapolitan court, Troubridge was busy in a manlier fashion. He was besieging the castle of St. Elmo, driving the French out of Caprea and Gaeta, or in command of the blockade of Malta. At this point, too, a subtle note of discord crept into the friendship betwixt Troubridge and his admiral. Nelson, indeed, praised with generous and characteristic exaggeration Troubridge's performances in storming castles, &c. "On land," he assured Lord Spencer, "the captain of the *Culloden* is a first-rate general!" But the winds that blow over the quarterdeck are healthier than the infected air of a court; and Troubridge felt the generous anger of a manly nature as he watched his famous admiral soiling his fame amid the flatteries and frivolities of the court of King Ferdinand.

Troubridge warned Nelson, with sailor-like frankness, of the mischief he was doing to his own reputation; and the warnings had the result that might be expected. Nelson could forgive his frank-spoken subordinate; but Lady Hamilton hated him with an offended woman's long-enduring spite.

Early in 1800 Troubridge was captain of the Channel fleet off Brest, under Lord St. Vincent, and through the November gales of that year he showed a hardihood and seamanship which moved

the unstinted admiration of even St. Vincent's rugged nature. In February 1801, St. Vincent went to the Admiralty, and he took Troubridge with him as his first sea Lord, a rare compliment to the range and scale of Troubridge's qualities. To step from the quarterdeck of the *Culloden* to the council chamber at Whitehall; to exchange the wide sea horizon for the narrow walls of the Admiralty office, was an experience which would have sadly tried the qualities of most men. But Troubridge showed himself not only a great sailor but a man of affairs, a cool and wise administrator. Yet he probably found the years betwixt 1801–4 the most trying period of his whole career. He had to fight English contractors instead of French three-deckers, and found the combat much less glorious and infinitely the more exhausting of the two. In these days, too, the discord betwixt Nelson and himself—on Nelson's part at least—grew shrill. Troubridge, instead of receiving orders, gave them; and Nelson, who was always impatient of Admiralty control, found these orders still more trying when they came from the lips of his old sea-comrade and subordinate.

Troubridge's friendly advice, oddly enough, exasperated Nelson more than even his official orders. When Nelson was watching the French flotilla in the bitter Channel gales, and complaining loudly—

and no doubt justly—of the sufferings of his emaciated body, Troubridge wrote recommending him to "wear flannel shirts." Nelson treated this as a deadly insult. "He is, I suppose, laughing at me," he wrote; "but never mind." "The *great* Troubridge," he wrote again, in all the vehemence of italics, "has *cowed* the spirits of Nelson. But I shall never forget it."

In April 1805, Troubridge, flying the flag of a rear-admiral, was sent out to the East Indies to take command in all the waters east of Point de Galle. He took as his flagship the *Blenheim*, an old and battered vessel, which, as a three-decker, had played a part in famous battles, but which was now cut down to a 74, and was destined to be Troubridge's coffin. At the coast of Madagascar Troubridge, with ten Indiamen under his convoy, stumbled across Admiral Linois in the *Marengo*, a fine three-decker, with two heavily-armed frigates. Linois mistook the *Blenheim* itself for a fat Indiaman, and bore confidently down to its capture. The *Marengo* and one of the French frigates—the *Belle Poule*—actually opened fire on the *Blenheim*, expecting to see her flag go fluttering down. There was a heavy swell on, and the *Blenheim*, rolling deeply, could not open her main-deck ports. But she shot so fiercely with her upper-deck guns that Linois was quickly persuaded that this

was no commercial-minded Indiaman, and he drew off and left the leaky, but hard-hitting *Blenheim* with her convoy untroubled.

Troubridge's orders were to take over part of the command of Sir Edward Pellew, who was commander-in-chief in India and China; but Pellew objected to the arrangement as impolitic. The dispute was referred to the Admiralty, whose decision proved to be in favour of Pellew, and Troubridge was ordered to hoist his flag as commander-in-chief at the Cape.

The battered old *Blenheim*, meanwhile, had been ashore in the Straits of Malacca, an experience which did not add to her seaworthiness. Her captain, Bissell, declared it to be impossible to keep her afloat till she reached the Cape; but the man who had refitted his ship at sea the day before the battle of Cape St. Vincent, and who kept the *Culloden* afloat after bumping for nine hours on the rocky shoal of Aboukir island, had learned to scorn sea-risks of every kind. He probably felt he could navigate a sieve to the Cape! And the *Blenheim* was very much in the condition of a sieve. Such was the confidence in Troubridge's seamanship, however, that many Indian officials returning to England sought berths eagerly in even the leaky and groaning *Blenheim*, since it flew Troubridge's flag.

Troubridge sailed from Madras on January 12, 1807, having under his flag the *Java*, a captured Dutch frigate nearly as old and unseaworthy as the *Venerable* itself, and the *Harrier*, a brig of war. On February 1, less than three weeks afterwards—when the three ships were off the coast of Madagascar—they were caught in a cyclone. The *Harrier*, a fine sea-boat, rode out the gale safely; but when the cyclone had blown itself out, and sky and sea were clear again, both the *Venerable* and the *Java* had vanished. A glimpse was caught of them by the lookouts of the *Harrier* when the cyclone was at its fiercest. The huge and clumsy hull of the *Venerable* showed black against the grey of the wind-torn clouds; but she lay with slanting decks and torn canvas almost on her beam ends. A screen of driving rain hid the two ships, and they were never seen again. The bravest of English seamen, with his gallant crew of over 500 men, had perished, and the *Java* shared the same fate. No fragment of either ship was ever recovered.

It was fitting that the sea, "that vast and wandering grave," should be the sepulchre of Troubridge. It had been for over thirty years his school, his home, the field of his fame. Yet—even after well-nigh a century has gone—it kindles a sharp pang of pathetic regret to picture Troubridge—who had played so gallant a part in great events,

who had led the British fleet so proudly into battle on the great day of Cape St. Vincent—standing on the slanting quarterdeck of the sinking *Ilenheim*, while the grey and driving mists of the cyclone closed round him, and the war-battered ship and the great sailor went down together.

CHAPTER VII

SIR BENJAMIN HALLOWELL (CAREW) (1760–1834)

"*That brave fellow Hallowell.*"—LORD HOOD.

"*Why is Captain Hallowell omitted? He rendered more service than almost any other officer.*"—NELSON.

AMONGST Nelson's captains there towers one gigantic figure, with the stature of a life-guardsman, the limbs of an athlete, and face which is only redeemed from that of a prize-fighter by the quizzical eyes that look out from it, and the lines of humour and good-nature with which it is stamped. Hallowell and Nelson, put side by side, offered an almost absurd physical contrast. Hallowell could almost have put Nelson in his pocket. The boyish stature of the one, the half-blinded face, the maimed and attenuated body, make the giant height and massive limbs of the other only more notable. Yet, perhaps, upon none of his captains did Nelson stamp more sharply many, at least, of his characteristics—his vehement fighting impulse, his habit of swift decision, his confident expectation of victory—than upon Hallowell. They had shared together the perils and hardships of

Wm Hallowell Carew

SIR BENJAMIN HALLOWELL (CAREW)

the siege of Calvi. They had slept in the trenches, and toiled in the batteries, side by side. Hallowell, in fact, shared with Nelson the command of the batteries, each in turn taking duty for twenty-four hours consecutively. Hallowell was then a young commander, little over thirty; Nelson was two years older, and the gigantic young Canadian—for Hallowell was born in Canada—caught a spark of Nelson's fiery spirit, which burned in him to the very end of his career.

Hallowell, however, was no mere water-colour copy of Nelson. There was in him a salt of originality, of humour, of unconventional independence, which gives him quite a separate place in the great brotherhood of Nelson's captains. It was as though he brought with him to the gun-room and the quarterdeck a breath from Canadian backwoods.

An incident on the morning of the great fight off Cape St. Vincent, illustrates Hallowell's free spirit and unconventional humour. He was without a ship, and was a supernumerary on Jervis' quarterdeck. The day had broken; the Spanish fleet, a long irregular line, seemed to fill the whole sea horizon. Jervis himself, with bent head and grim face, was staring at his enemies from under his slanting eyebrows. His flag-captain, Calder, was anxiously counting the Spanish ships. The

number he announced, mounted steadily, till at last, with a voice that had in it a quiver of anxiety, he declared the number to be twenty-seven, and he reminded Jervis that he had only fifteen under his flag.

"Enough of that, sir," cried Jervis impatiently. "The die is cast! And if there are fifty sail I will go through them."

Hallowell stood towering amongst the group of officers on the quarterdeck; and when he heard Jervis' harsh voice uttering that fateful sentence, he slapped the great admiral on the back, exclaiming in his great voice:

"That's right, Sir John! And, by G—, we'll give them a d—d good licking!"

Now, in that fleet—the finest fleet, Nelson himself said, the sea ever carried—there were, no doubt, hundreds who welcomed the approach of battle with a delight as vehement as that of Hallowell. But it may be confidently said there was no second man in the whole fleet who would have ventured to slap Sir John Jervis—that grimmest of admirals—publicly on the back, on his own quarterdeck, by way of showing that he approved of his resolve to fight.

Who beside Hallowell, again, would have sent Nelson, in the very fulness of his fame, that strange present of a coffin—its wood taken from the

mast of the *Orient*, its nails hammered from the iron bolts of vanquished Brueys' flagship! Hallowell explained he sent it, "that when you are tired of this life, you may be buried in one of your own trophies." But it may be guessed that behind this strange gift there was something better than a jest, or a whimsical caprice. Nelson at that moment was falling visibly under the baleful influence of Lady Hamilton. Naples was proving his Capua. And Hallowell's humour shaped this strange gift to Nelson as both a rebuke and an appeal. It was as though, for a moment, an echo of the deep thunders of the Nile sent its vibration through the poisoned atmosphere of the Sicilian court.

Hallowell's career was both long and picturesque. He was born in Canada in 1760; entered the navy at an age when modern boys are playing at kindergarten games, and struck his flag as commander-in-chief at the Nore in 1824. He fought in American waters under Sir Samuel Hood as a very youthful lieutenant; cruised for sweltering months on the African coast; shared with Nelson, as we have seen, in the sieges of Bastia and Calvi; commanded a 74 in that miserable scratching-match under Hotham, called the fight off Hyères; saw the battle of Cape St. Vincent from the British flagship's quarterdeck; took part in sieges,

in desperate frigate actions, in yet more desperate boat attacks; was shipwrecked; was captured; played a shining part in the great fight of the Nile; tasted the bitterness of failure in the second expedition to Egypt under General Fraser, and knew a still more bitter disgust by missing the great Armageddon of Trafalgar, his ship, the *Tigre*, being one of the little squadron detached to Gibraltar under Louis just before Villeneuve came lumbering out of Cadiz to his doom. This surely makes up a very gallant and stirring record!

Hallowell was a cool and wary, as well as a gallant, fighter. He commanded the *Lowestoft*, a modest-sized frigate, in the curiously-tangled fight off Genoa under Hotham, in 1795. When the wind failed, he found his frigate lying stern-to under the broadside of the *Duquesne*, a great French 74; and the Frenchman, opening her lower-deck ports, commenced to bellow with her guns at the little English frigate. Hallowell sent all his crew below except the man at the wheel; and, with his lieutenant by his side, marched composedly up and down his quarterdeck, while the *Duquesne* pelted him with angry broadsides. A flaw in the wind at last enabled him to draw, in a very bedraggled condition, out of the Frenchman's fire, but not a man had been hit, a circumstance which

proves very bad shooting on the part of the Frenchman. Saumarez at the Nile sank, with a single broadside, a French frigate that had dared to fire at him; but the *Duquesne* at short range roared at the *Lowestoft* for nearly an hour, and did not kill a man.

Hallowell was promoted in the same year to the *Courageuse*, a fine 74, and was then overtaken by one of the great sorrows of his life. He was absent from his ship at a court-martial when, on December 19, 1796, a gale of extraordinary violence broke on the narrow straits that run past Gibraltar. His ship was torn from her anchors in the Bay of Gibraltar itself, and blown out into the straits. To run with the gale through the Gut meant running into Villeneuve's fleet, and the officer in command stood over towards the Barbary coast. With the coming of night, the gale deepened. Through the wild night, across the black sea, the doomed ship was driven, till, about 9 P.M., she struck on the rocks at the foot of Apes' Hill, and became an instant wreck. The mainmast as it fell actually touched the rocks, and more than a hundred of the crew scrambled along this slippery and perilous bridge to shore, in spite of the black waves which leaped up at them; but, out of nearly 600 officers and men, only 129 escaped.

Hallowell now sank to the command of a frigate, the *Lively*, but was soon transferred to the *Swiftsure*, under Nelson's flag, and with that ship his fame is linked for all time.

He shared, of course, in the memorable sea-chase of Brueys across the Mediterranean. When, late in the afternoon, on August 1, 1798, the French fleet was discovered lying at anchor in Aboukir Bay, the *Swiftsure*, with the *Alexander*, was far in the rear. Night had actually fallen; the fiery drama of the great battle was begun as the two laggard ships came up. Nelson, with wise foresight, had directed four lights to be hoisted horizontally at the mizzen-peak of each British ship as soon as darkness fell; and down to that line of lights burning high in the darkness, with the red intermittent flashes of the guns beneath, the *Swiftsure* bore, the *Alexander* following her. Hallowell knew how well-nigh impossible it was to break his men off their guns when once they had opened fire, and he had given sternest orders that, till each ship had anchored at her place in the line and the sails were clewed up, and until he had given the word, not a shot was to be fired. So through the darkness, in majestic and ordered silence, the men silent at their quarters, the captain silent on the quarterdeck; the voice of the leadsman calling at intervals

the depth he found, being the only sound, the great ship came on to the fight.

Presently the French battery on the island discovered through the gloom the tall masts and ghostly canvas of the *Swiftsure* gliding past, and opened on her, fast and furiously. As the *Swiftsure* lifted to the slow swell, a shot struck her larboard bow several feet below the water-line. The sea rushed in, the chain pumps had to be manned, and Hallowell's ship actually went into the fight with her pumps going, and four feet of water in the hold! Just then, through the gloom, without lights or colours, came drifting the hulk of a dismasted ship. It was instantly guessed to be a Frenchman, and the captain of every gun on the larboard broadside of the *Swiftsure* stood ready to fire at the supposed enemy, coming a mere black shape through the darkness. Hallowell hailed from the quarterdeck, "What ship's that?" and got the answer, "*Bellerophon;* going out of action disabled."

The *Bellerophon*, a 74, had fought a manful battle with the 120 guns of the *Orient*, Brueys' flagship, and, in addition, had been raked by the *Tonnant*. Two of her masts had gone by the board; every third man in her crew had been killed or wounded; she had caught fire in several places, and, at twenty minutes past eight, she had cut her stern cable,

dropped the foresail on her shattered foremast, and crept out of the fight.

Hallowell instantly moved to the post abandoned by the *Bellerophon*, dropped anchor, clewed up his sails with perfect coolness, and then, from a distance of about 200 yards, opened fire upon the starboard bow of the *Orient*. But one ship, even though a three-decker, was not sufficient for Hallowell, and he expended part of his broadside on the quarter of the *Franklin*.

A little after nine o'clock flames were visible in one of the cabins of the *Orient*. Hallowell concentrated his guns on that particular spot in the Frenchman; he lined his bulwarks with his marines, and whipped the burning cabin with musketry bullets.

The fire spread; it ran along the deck; it leaped from sail to sail; it thrust its red tongue out from one port after another. It was clear that the Frenchman must soon vanish in one sea-shaking explosion; and the *Swiftsure* lay within less than pistol-shot distance of her! But Hallowell clung with fierce tenacity to his enemy. He was to windward; the smoke and sparks blew clear of him, so he kept his guns busy to the last minute, in the meanwhile closing his hatches, clearing his deck of everything inflammable, and stationing lines of men, with buckets of water, to quench

any fire that might break out. Then he suddenly shut his ports and waited for the blast.

It came! The burning deck and spars of the French flagship flew up through the darkness in fiery fragments; the *Swiftsure* shook to her very keel with the blast. One piece of burning wreck dropped, like a fragment from an exploded planet, into the maintop, a second into the foretop, of the British ship. The deck was covered with red showers of burning rope and timber, but these were quickly extinguished, and, after a sullen pause, the tumult of the battle broke out afresh.

No ship at the Nile fought more gallantly than the *Swiftsure*, and no captain showed greater coolness and judgment than Hallowell. The story of the fight, however, as told in the *Swiftsure's* log, is, as might be expected, a bit of very drab-coloured prose. Here are extracts:—

"*At* 8.3 *let go our small bower anchor in seven fathoms water with a spring. At* 8.5 *commenced firing at the enemy, a two-decked ship called the* Franklin, *on our starboard quarter, and a three-decked ship called* L'Orient *on the starboard bow. At* 9.3 L'Orient *caught fire, and at* 9.37 *she blew up. Hove in the cable and spring occasionally. Picked up nine men, one lieutenant and commissary, who escaped out of* L'Orient. *Ceased firing. Saw the* Alexander's

bowsprit and her main topgallant sail to be on fire. At 10.20 *sent Lieutenant Cowen to take possession of the enemy's ship that lay on our quarter, who hailed us that she had struck, with her main and mizzen masts gone. At* 10.35 *he returned, finding she was taken possession of by an officer from the* Defence. *At* 10.40 *saw the* Alexander *and* Majestic *engaging two of the enemy's ships to the S. by E. of us about a mile. . . . At* 5.27 *saw six sail of the enemy's ships had struck their colours. . . . Carpenters employed stopping the shot-holes. . . . People employed knotting and splicing the rigging. At* 6 *the* Majestic *fired minute guns on interring her captain, who was killed in the action."*

Let the reader notice how, through the dull syllables of that bald record, shines the evidence of great qualities and of great deeds. At 8.3 the *Swiftsure's* anchor drops; at 8.5 — or in exactly two minutes—every gun in her starboard broadside is bellowing at the *Orient* and the *Franklin*. The cool discipline that held that long line of gun-crews, frozen into silence and arrest so long, and that released them and set them into intense activity at the dramatic moment, so instantly, is remarkable. An hour's furious battle—the *Swiftsure's* men toiling with silent and disciplined energy at their guns—lies undescribed between the next two sentences.

Then, for half-an-hour, the *Orient* is burning; she explodes! The *Swiftsure*, in that hour of heroic strife, has done her part in destroying the greatest and proudest ship in the French line.

Hallowell's fine energy was not exhausted by the great fight. "I should have sunk under the fatigue of refitting the squadron," Nelson wrote to St. Vincent, "but for Troubridge, Ball, Hood, and Hallowell. Not but all have done well; but these are my supporters."

The *Swiftsure* was one of the ships left to guard the coast of Egypt while Nelson sailed for Naples. During this period an incident occurs which illustrates both the bright and the dark side of war. While cruising off Alexandria the *Swiftsure* discovered a French cutter running for the shore. She carried despatches for Bonaparte, and had on board General Camin, Captain Villette, Bonaparte's aide-de-camp, and a few soldiers. The *Swiftsure* opened her guns on the cutter, but the daring little craft refused to bring to, and finally ran ashore. By this time a band of Arabs made their appearance on the beach, and waited eagerly to cut the throats of the dripping Frenchmen as they scrambled out of the surf. The French were in sore straits. Seaward, the British boats were coming fast up; on the beach were the waiting Arabs.

The French officers chose to take their chance

of cutting their way through the Bedouins. They scrambled ashore, but were instantly hunted down, stripped, and slain. The British boats watched the whole dreadful drama. The general and his aide-de-camp had fallen on their knees, and were entreating for mercy, while an Arab on horseback unslung his carbine, and deliberately aimed at the kneeling men. The piece missed fire. It was reprimed, and the general and his aide-de-camp in turn were shot. The courier that bore the despatches broke through the Arabs and fled, but was overtaken and killed. The British sailors by this time were on fire to save the unhappy Frenchmen. A rope was fastened to an empty keg, a middy named Fane leaped into the sea, where a high swell was now running, and, pushing the keg before him, swam through the high surf to the stranded cutter, and brought off its captain and crew.

In March Hallowell rejoined his admiral at Palermo, and took a characteristically energetic part in the siege of St. Elmo. A good sailor always lays his ship as close to his enemy as possible; and Hallowell applied the methods of a sea-fight to the siege. He constructed a battery of 36-pounders close up to the walls of the fort, and under the screen of a couple of trees. Removing the trees before opening fire was a perilous piece of business, and the Neapolitan soldiers shrank from the task;

whereupon Troubridge and Hallowell, with a couple of officers, coolly walked out into the open, and stood there, under a shower of lead from the fort, while the trees were cut down.

Hallowell at this stage of his career narrowly missed a quite unique distinction. Most people forget that while Nelson, in 1799, was operating on the coast of Italy, British boats rowed up the Tiber, and a British captain (Louis) hoisted the English flag on the Capitol, and acted, for a short time, as Governor of Rome. This distinction ought to have fallen to Hallowell. He was off Civita Vecchia, and had sent a summons for its surrender, when he was recalled, and Louis took his place, and enjoyed what, for a British seaman, was the bold distinction of sitting in the place of Cæsars and Popes as master of Rome!

In June 1801 came the most bitter experience of Hallowell's career. He was convoying some transports from Aboukir to Malta, when the news reached him that a powerful French squadron under Ganteaume had made its appearance in the Mediterranean, apparently on its way to Egypt. When he heard the news, Hallowell took a daring and very unconventional resolve. He abandoned his slow and lumbering transports, and spread every inch of canvas to join Warren at Malta, where he knew every man and gun was needed. On June 24,

just as dawn was breaking over the eastern sea-rim, Hallowell ran into Ganteaume's squadron! The *Swiftsure* was old and slow; her leaky hull was encrusted with barnacles. She was more fit for the dockyard than the battle or the breeze, and only the finest seamanship kept her afloat and fit for service. Ganteaume's ships were new and clean and swift. Hallowell found he could not escape; he must match his single ship against a squadron.

The French van consisted of the flagship, of 80 guns, a 74, and a frigate; two other two-deckers of 74 guns each were beating up in the rear. The chase lasted from half-past three in the morning till 2 P.M. Ganteaume, a clever seaman, sent two of his ships in the wake of the *Swiftsure*, while the other three kept on their course to cut her off. By eight o'clock the three ships had fore-reached on the *Swiftsure*, when they tacked and closed rapidly on the English ship; while the French 74's astern were also coming up fast. Hallowell found he could not outsail his enemies, and he attempted a daring and unlooked-for stroke. He suddenly put up his helm, and ran down before the wind straight on the French van. It was his one remaining chance, and a very desperate chance. If he could, with his single ship, cripple two line-of-battle ships and a frigate before the remainder of the squadron came up, he might escape.

Never was a more audacious stroke attempted. But Ganteaume was a seaman scarcely inferior to Hallowell himself, and the superior sailing quality of his ships enabled him to "head off" the battered and lumbering *Swiftsure* from breaking through to leeward. For an hour and seven minutes Hallowell fought the three Frenchmen; then he found the two other French 74's within gunshot on his quarter. His masts, sails, and rigging were cut to pieces. It took the French, indeed, six days' toil afterwards to repair the damages they had inflicted on the British ship. The *Swiftsure*, in brief, was a wreck under the guns of four French line-of-battle ships, and Hallowell surrendered. The sea struggle of those stern days witnessed some strange incidents. So it came to pass that on that famous Sunday morning when Nelson at Trafalgar bore down on Villeneuve's far-stretching line, the *Swiftsure*, which at the Nile helped to destroy a French flagship, was itself flying a French flag; and it took much hard pounding on the part of two other famous Nile ships—the *Bellerophon* and the *Orion*—together with the *Colossus*, to bring the *Swiftsure* under the British flag again!

Hallowell was released on parole till peace came, and was honourably acquitted for the loss of his ship. He was in command of the *Argo*, of 44 guns, cruising on the coast of Africa, when war

broke out again. He at once received the command of a fine 80-gun ship, the *Tigre*, joined Nelson off Toulon, and took part in the historic pursuit of Villeneuve to the West Indies and back. He missed Trafalgar, as we have already said, having been one of the squadron detached under Louis to water at Gibraltar just before Villeneuve ventured out to sea. How gallant a part Hallowell, with his fine ship, would have played at Trafalgar may be guessed.

In 1807 Hallowell convoyed 5000 British troops to Egypt, on that ill-planned, ill-fated, and ill-executed expedition under Fraser. He took part in the land operations, and showed all the energy, daring, and resource which the comrade of Nelson at Calvi might be expected to show. "He was," wrote one of the military officers, "the life and soul of that expedition.' In the disastrous attack on Rosetta, Hallowell displayed characteristic resource. The British general wished to cross the Nile and make a surprise attack on the enemy's post at daybreak. The problem was how, without bridge or boat, to transport the attacking force across the broad river. Hallowell's keen eye discovered some sunken and shattered boats in the bed of the Nile. He marked the spot, fished them up under the shelter of the darkness, made them roughly water-tight, and carried the whole attack-

ing force, over 300 strong, triumphantly and safely across at the appointed hour. The soldiers came out of the absurd Egyptian expedition with thinned ranks and damaged prestige; whatever credit was won, fell to Hallowell and his seamen.

Hallowell, in the *Tigre*, formed one of the squadron under Admiral Martin, which, on October 25, 1809, chased three French line-of-battle ships and a fine frigate until the Frenchmen, in despair, deliberately ran themselves ashore near the harbour of Cette; a service which, if bloodless, was yet daring and important, for it robbed France of three of her finest remaining ships of war. In the same year Hallowell's boats led in a very brilliant little attack on four French ships, in charge of a convoy, that had taken refuge under the protection of some strong batteries in the Bay of Rosas. The shore was lined with French troops, who covered the threatened ships with volleys of musketry, while the guns of the great batteries thundered in their defence from the cliffs. But the British sailors were not to be denied, and the eleven French ships—convoy and convoyed alike—were destroyed or brought out triumphantly, and after a fight which lasted only a few minutes. The British seaman in those great days was a curiously efficient fighting instrument!

In 1812 Hallowell hoisted his flag in the *Malta*,

perhaps the finest 80-gun ship then afloat; but by this time French ships had practically vanished from the sea, and no opportunity of shining service remained to British seamen. After so many stormy years of war, there yet remained for Hallowell nearly twenty years of peace; and in 1828 a curious bit of good fortune befell him. He had just struck his last flag, when a cousin bequeathed to him a great landed estate, worth £12,000 a year, with a stately mansion set in a wide and leafy park. Perhaps, however, the sudden gift of such a fortune, coming so late, may be regarded as an example of the irony of human affairs. "Half as much," said Hallowell, himself, to some one who congratulated him—"half as much twenty years ago had, indeed, been a blessing; but now I am old and crank." It was a condition of his fortune that he should take the name and arms of Carew; so while Hallowell lived, and fought, and won fame under one name. he died under another.

CHAPTER VIII

SIR ALEXANDER BALL (1757–1809)

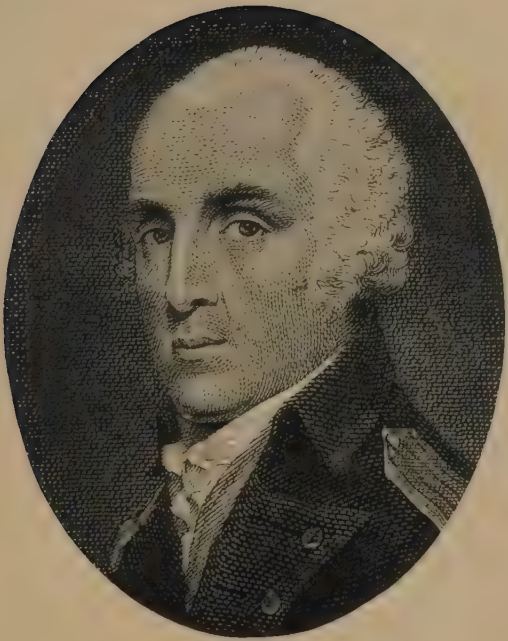
"My dear Ball,—How you are to be rewarded time must discover, but a more fatiguing service never fell to the lot of a human being. . . . The truth will always stand that La Valetta could not have been taken but by the patience, ability, gallantry, conciliating manners, and goodness of Captain Alexander John Ball. This I believe is known to all Europe, and shall be repeated."—NELSON TO BALL.

AMONGST the daring, light-hearted, and weather-tanned seamen of Nelson's time—men who knew the sea in all its moods, as sea-birds do, but knew little else—the figure of Sir Alexander Ball stands with an almost humorous sense of incongruity. Ball, at a hundred points of character, was almost everything that the typical seaman of that day was not. There was no strain of sea-salt in his blood; no hint of the tar-brush in his speech. He was slow, meditative, gentle-tempered—a bookish man, with a turn for hazy debate and still more hazy philosophy. His happiest hours, Ball himself used to declare, were those he could devote to reading, which is certainly not a mental habitude we could reasonably expect to flourish in the gun-

rooms of His Majesty's ships in the days of Rodney and of Nelson; and Ball served under both those great sea-warriors.

Ball, however, read books as a cow might digest grass—in a patient, ruminating, but unintellectual fashion almost pathetic. Still, his literary tastes were genuine enough, though they had odd limitations. Coleridge gravely reports that, as far as he knew, Ball had read only one poem; that was Wordsworth's "Peter Bell"! Coleridge spent eighteen months in Malta with Sir Alexander Ball; and, contemplating him through the opium-tinted lens of his own imagination, he naturally clad that honest sailor's head with a very astonishing nimbus. But we may accept Coleridge's statement that, at least once every week, Ball invited the philosopher to write down his thoughts on some given subject, while he did the same; and philosopher and seaman would then exchange papers. Now, to swop philosophical meditations weekly with Coleridge is certainly about the last exercise which might be expected to give delight to a seaman who had fought under Rodney at the Battle of the Saints, and with Nelson at the Nile!

Judged by look, temperament, and bent of mind, Nature intended Ball to be the incumbent of a country parish, or the decorous head of a Govern-



SIR ALEXANDER BALL

From an engraving after R. Smirke, R.A., *in the British Museum*

ment department, or a spectacled professor—say, of political economy—in some small university. The country parish would probably have suited him best. He would have patted the head of every good little boy or girl in the village with placid benevolence, would have listened with solemn attention to the ailments of all his parishioners, and would have delivered perfectly orthodox and slightly dull sermons from his pulpit every Sunday. He would probably have mounted to the bench of bishops, and, in that case, would have worn his lawn sleeves with entire gravity and decorousness. And yet this mild, slow, meditative man, who could exchange philosophical reflections with Coleridge, and win the admiration of little boys and girls in Malta, was the seaman who, in the *Alexander*, off Cape Sicie, hung on to Nelson's half-dismasted flagship, the *Vanguard*, with a daring that amazed Nelson himself; and who, in the darkness at the Nile, took his ship into that hell of mingled fire and thunder, where Frenchmen and Englishmen were slaying and being slain, with a cool audacity that not Nelson himself could have exceeded.

The truth is, that it is the mild-voiced, meditative, domesticated, and severely-conscientious Briton, after all, who, when fighting is his business, and his cause is good, and his enemy is in sight, turns out, to the astonishment of mankind, to be about

the most dogged and terrible fighter the world knows.

No two men could well be more unlike each other, in some respects, than Nelson and Sir Alexander Ball. Nelson was all extremes; little in little things, supremely great in great affairs. Ball had no fluctuations, and knew no "moods." The Mediterranean is a tideless sea; and Ball might be described as a "tideless" man. Nelson was fretful, vehement, extravagant alike in love and hate; while an almost bovine patience marked Ball's temper. To hate most foreigners and all Frenchmen was, in Nelson's odd creed, almost a duty—nay, the first of duties; whereas Ball held that other nations had some virtues, at least, which Englishmen might covet; and he was vehemently suspected in later days of being himself more Maltese than English.

Nelson reached his conclusions with lightning-like intuition; Ball toiled to his goal with slow and heavy-footed diligence; but both men, though by very unlike methods, reached the same conclusion. And the very difference between them perhaps explains the specially close friendship which linked them together. Nelson found in Ball the qualities he himself lacked—a patient temper, an unshaken serenity of spirit, a judgment which, if it was slow, was cool and sure. Nelson's

acquaintance with Ball began unhappily. In 1783, during a brief interlude of peace, many British officers lived in France, drawn by various motives —curiosity, economy, or the desire to learn the language. Nelson met Ball at St. Omer, and, being usually of a moody temper—except when fighting the French—he found occasion of offence in Ball's very appearance, in the gravity of his countenance, and in the distressing circumstance that he wore epaulettes. These innocent adornments were not worn in the British navy till a dozen years later, but they were a convenience to officers in France, as they announced the rank of the wearer. "Two noble captains are here—Ball and Shepherd," Nelson wrote fretfully to a friend; "they wear fine epaulettes, for which I think them great coxcombs. They have not visited me, and I shall not court their acquaintance."

That fretful mood towards Ball revived in Nelson's mind fifteen years after, when, in May 1798, Ball, in command of the *Alexander*, joined Nelson, forming one of the immortal squadron that was to cross the Mediterranean twice in pursuit of Villeneuve, and to win at the Nile one of the greatest sea victories known to history. As Ball crossed the gangway of the *Vanguard* to report himself to his admiral, Nelson exclaimed peevishly, "What, have you come to have your bones

broken?" The sting of a gadfly could hardly have disturbed Ball's philosophic calm, and he replied cheerfully, that while he had no wish to have his bones broken, yet if duty and country required it they should not be spared. Ball had the prospect of a very trying time with Nelson; but within a fortnight he had won that fretful but generous hero's heart by a splendid exhibition of coolness and courage.

On May 9 the *Vanguard*, the *Orion*, and the *Alexander* sailed from Gibraltar. On the 20th a furious gale caught the three ships between Corsica and the southern coast of Italy. The *Vanguard*, a somewhat rickety ship, which rolled like a barrel, fared badly. Her main and mizzen topmasts went; then her foremast was literally rolled overboard, snapping close to the deck. Here was a flagship in imminent peril of being carried by the heavy westward swell on to the Sardinian coast. Ball's seamanship was of the careful and thorough order, and he brought the *Alexander* through the gale unharmed. But he did more than this. When the gale was at its highest point he took the helpless *Vanguard* in tow.

All through the night of the 22nd the *Alexander* toiled on, dragging the flagship, slowly and doggedly, off the coast. But the swell was furious —the breakers were near—and Nelson, the last

man in the world to risk another ship to save his own, ordered the *Alexander* to cast off the hawser. Ball shook his head in placid refusal to obey, and persisted in his refusal, till Nelson broke into furious threats, and imperiously ordered Ball to cast them loose. Ball at last took his speaking-trumpet and shouted back, "I feel confident that I can bring her in safe. I therefore must not—and, by the help of Almighty God, I WILL NOT—leave you!" He hung on to the half-wrecked *Vanguard* till, on the 23rd, she found safe anchorage under the lee of San Pietro. Nelson's first business was to go on board the *Alexander* and embrace the somewhat embarrassed Ball, crying, in his vehement way, "A friend in need is a friend indeed!"

From that moment the two men were close friends. Ball, indeed, became the closest friend Nelson possessed. He had a splendid faculty for silence and for sympathy. Nelson could empty upon him all his emotions—hate of the French, wrath against the Admiralty, the story of all the pains with which his own little shot-battered body was tormented. And Nelson found that Ball's slow and almost inarticulate judgment was of amazing steadiness and soundness. Ball acted, in a word, as Nelson's cooler and steadier self. Nelson reports all his doings to Ball almost as

regularly as he does to the first Lord of the Admiralty, and much more frankly. "I am very, very miserable," is the burden of many of his letters to his friend; "but, miserable or not, I am ever, my dear Ball, yours." Once, in company, somebody referred to Nelson's missing right arm. Troubridge and Ball were both present at the moment. Nelson stepped up between the pair, and cried, "Who shall dare tell me that I want an arm when I have three right arms—this (putting forward his own left arm) and Ball and Troubridge." When Ball—the philosopher in him getting the upper hand of the seaman—proposed to give up the navy, Nelson wrote to him, "You must take your flag when it comes to you; for who is to command our fleets in the future war?" In Nelson's judgment, Ball, for all his apparent slowness, his love of books, and his easy temper, was still a man fit to lead an English fleet to battle.

Ball, for all his unsmiling gravity and incapacity for enjoying poetry, must have had some gleam of imagination in him. It was reading "Robinson Crusoe," he told Coleridge, that sent him to sea. It is interesting to reflect on the number of recruits which that immortal tale has given to the fleets of England. Ball's career was uneventful till, in 1781, when twenty-four years of age,

he joined the *Sandwich*, Rodney's flagship. He followed the great admiral to his new flagship, the *Formidable*—the ship which ranks almost with Anson's *Centurion*, or with the *Victory* itself, in fame. He shared in the long manœuvres which preceded the Battle of the Saints, and in that great fight itself. In the grey dawn of April 12, 1782, it will be remembered that De Grasse was discovered to the leeward of Rodney's line; and Douglas, the captain of the fleet, rushed down into the admiral's cabin with the news that "God had given him his enemy on the lee bow." It is easy to picture the eager faces that peered from the quarterdeck of the *Formidable* through the mist to leeward, where the tall masts of the Frenchman moved like ghosts through the fog, and Ball's quiet and sober face, no doubt, was an odd contrast to the exultant countenances of his comrades. But, in the stern and bloody fight which followed, Ball played a gallant part. He fought his section of guns with a coolness and skill which won him distinction; and, two days after the battle, he received his commanders' commission, and hoisted his flag on the *Germain*.

Peace threw him out of employment for more than seven years, but in July 1790 he took command of the *Nemesis*, a 28-gun frigate. He did nothing brilliant for the next six years, perhaps

because there was no chance of it; but his plodding thoroughness, his perfect knowledge of his profession, and his quiet strength of character, gave him a high place in his vocation. No ship was better found, better disciplined, or better kept than that which flew Ball's flag. The wave of mutinous feeling which swept over the British navy in the early muster affected Ball's crew too. When he took command of the *Nemesis* he found that it was manned with almost the worst crew in the navy. Many of them were raw Irish peasants, sent to the fleet as a punishment for treason. Many were the mere refuse and sweepings of the gaols. His predecessor in the ship had maintained the semblance of order by the incessant use of the cat-o'-nine-tails, but Ball was both too humane and too wise for that crude remedy.

He drew up a simple code of rules, with penalties; took care that every man of the ship was familiar with them; and enforced them with leisurely and passionless strength. He had three questions which he addressed to every offender: "Did you commit the act?" "Did you know it was a breach of the rule?" "Was it not in your power to avoid the offence?" He enlisted, that is, the reason and the conscience of his men on the side of law, and, while he punished resolutely, he always punished coolly,

and showed that he felt the punishment himself almost as much as the criminal did. "This," cries the enthusiastic Coleridge, who tells the tale, "this is the spirit of law, the lute of Amphion, the harp of Orpheus!" The Jacks in the forecastle of the *Nemesis* would probably have said that "they didn't know the gentlemen referred to." But it was certain that Ball's calm temper, and just and reasonable spirit, won his crew completely; till, from being a band of criminals and secret mutineers, they became as fine a body of loyal seamen as the navy possessed.

Ball's fame as a fighter is built on two incidents – the cool and gallant part he played at the Nile, and the iron tenacity he showed in the reduction of Malta. At the Nile, it will be remembered, the *Alexander* and the *Swiftsure* had been despatched from the main body of the fleet to look into Alexandria, where, about half-past one, they discovered two ships of the line and six frigates flying the French flag. Meanwhile, the leading ships of Nelson's fleet had discovered Brueys' fleet lying in Aboukir Bay; and though one-fourth of his fleet was from seven to ten miles distant, Nelson made his historic leap upon his enemy.

How eagerly the *Alexander* and the *Swiftsure* bore up to the scene of the great fight may be imagined. "At half-past two," runs the *Alexander's*

log, "saw the French fleet at anchor inside the Isle of Aboukir, amounting to thirteen sail of the line and four frigates. Made all sail possible toward them." But the south-west wind blew faintly, and it was half-past five before the *Alexander* rounded the reef where the *Culloden* lay helplessly ashore. The *Alexander*, in fact, well-nigh shared the fate of the *Culloden*. It was dark, a darkness made more perplexing by a haze that lay on sea and land. His lead warned Ball that the *Alexander* was running into shoal water—a warning reinforced by a frantically-waved lantern from the *Culloden*. The *Alexander* tacked to clear the reef, and that gave the *Swiftsure* the lead.

The whole scene of the fight now lay clear before the *Alexander* as it bore steadily down through the darkness, with men at quarters, and the stern silence which is part of the discipline of a man-of-war in every deck—a silence broken only by the high-pitched call of the leadsman, or the brief, stern word of command to the man at the wheel.

As Ball surveyed the scene of the battle, the rear of Brueys' line lay in silence and darkness. Faint points of light—the light of battle-lanterns gleaming through the gun-ports—alone revealed the position of the ships. But the head of the French line was a web of dancing flame. On

either side of each Frenchman lay a British 74, and the flash of the answering guns was incessant; their deep thunder shook sea and sky. Above, a gleam of lofty and level lights marked the position of the British ships; for each, by Nelson's orders, carried four horizontal lights on the mizzen-peak; but in the centre of the French line towered Brueys' flagship, the *Orient*, a monster of three decks. And she had, at the moment, no opponent; for there drifted past the *Alexander* in the darkness, a mastless wreck, the *Bellerophon*, which, crushed by the tremendous fire of the *Orient*, had, after a desperate and unequal combat, cut her cable and crept out of the fight, with every third man in her crew killed or wounded.

Hallowell, in the *Swiftsure*, with fine skill and courage, anchored his ship outside the French line, opposite the interval between the *Orient* and the *Franklin*, and opened a furious fire on both ships. One antagonist, even though it was a three-decker, was not enough for the gallant Hallowell.

But Ball showed an even cooler and more audacious courage. With perfect seamanship he took the *Alexander* through the French line, passing astern of the *Orient;* then he rounded to, and anchored close on the huge Frenchman's larboard quarter. It was half-past six when Foley commenced the battle by firing his broadside into the bows of the *Guerrier*. It was almost two hours afterwards, at

half-past eight, when the *Alexander* let go its best bower to larboard of the *Orient*, and opened fire on that monster.

For one long and fiery hour the *Alexander* poured its merciless broadsides into the French flagship, the *Swiftsure* firing into it from the other side of the line, and the *Leander*, a 50-gun ship, diligently raking it astern. At twenty-five minutes past nine the poop of the *Orient* was on fire, and the three British ships instantly brought every gun to bear on that spot. The fire spread fast. The flames ran up the tarred rigging, and raced along the sun-dried sails on the yardarms. It leaped, a cataract of flame, from deck to deck, and the great ship was quickly a roaring furnace, from which men were flinging themselves in crowds.

The British ships to leeward veered, or slipped, their cables, to escape catching fire themselves, the *Alexander* alone, to quote Mahan's words, "fiercely refusing" to do so till it was sure that the Frenchman's doom was sealed. Ball held on, indeed, till the jib and main-royal of his own ship were in flames! The mild and quiet Ball, in a word, when once the fight had begun, proved a more tenacious fighter than even his brother captains. And yet he had shown characteristic patience and forethought in his preparations for that fierce moment. He told Coleridge that every shroud and sail in

the ship not in actual use had been thoroughly wetted and so rolled up that it was a mere hard and uninflammable cylinder, while a certain portion of the crew had been detailed as firemen, and forbidden to take any part in the actual working of the guns.

The story of the fight, as told in the log of the *Alexander*, is interesting, and we give an extract:—

"At twenty-five minutes past eight, came to with a small bower, and commenced firing on one of the enemy's ships, a three-decker. At half-past do., let go the best bower, our ship being then on the larboard port of the enemy. At twenty-five minutes past nine, the ship we were engaged by took fire. At half-past do., cut the stern cable, ceased firing, veered away the best bower, and got alongside another of the enemy's ships, and commenced firing. At fifty minutes past nine, cut away the best bower cable to prevent ship on fire falling on board of us. At ten, the enemy's ship that was on fire blew up; with the explosion our jib and main-royal were set on fire. But cutting away the jib-boom and heaving the royal overboard, the fire was luckily extinguished. At a quarter-past twelve, came to with the sheet anchor, and commenced firing upon three of the enemy's ships. At a quarter-past three, ceased firing, cut away and threw overboard, to

prevent their taking fire, the main topsail, fore and main topgallant sails. At daylight, commenced the action again."

It will be noted with what businesslike diligence Ball fought. At half-past nine he had to cut his stern cable and cease firing on the *Orient* to escape sharing its doom. But he wasted no time; he instantly got alongside another of the enemy's ships and commenced firing on her. At ten the *Orient* blew up, and the crew of the *Alexander* had to fight hard to extinguish the flames which, at three points, had broken out on their own ship. At a quarter-past twelve the *Alexander* commenced firing upon three Frenchmen at once, maintained that fire for three hours, and then only ceased in order to extinguish its own burning sails. But there is an interval between the explosion of the *Orient* and the duel with the three Frenchmen, during which, according to Coleridge, a curious incident occurred. Here is his story:—

"At the renewal of the battle Captain Ball, though his ship was then on fire in three different parts, laid her alongside a French 84, and a second longer and obstinate contest began. The firing on the part of the French ship at last slackened, and then altogether ceased; and yet no sign was given of surrender. The senior lieutenant came to Captain Ball, and told him 'the hearts of the men were

as good as ever,' but that they were so completely exhausted, they were scarcely capable of lifting an arm. He asked whether, as the enemy had now ceased firing, the men might be permitted to lie down by their guns for a brief time. After some reflection Sir Alexander acceded to the proposal, taking of course the proper precautions to rouse them again at the moment he thought requisite. Accordingly, with the exception of himself, his officers, and the appointed watch, the ship's crew lay down, each in the place to which he was stationed, and slept for twenty minutes."

Now, that picture, of the British sailors sleeping beside their still warm guns, with the enemy's ships on every side of them—a little island of sleep set in the flaming heart of a great battle—is surely very picturesque. What other such incident can be found in the records of war? And it may be doubted whether there was any other British commander at the Nile sufficiently philosophical to allow his tired crew twenty minutes for slumber between the blowing up of the *Orient* and renewing the fight with the *Franklin!*

Ball's fighting capacity again finds shining illustration in the siege of Malta. The siege was long and stubborn, not to say sullen; a trial between the French and the British, not so much of valour, as of mere endurance. It was exactly

such a struggle as Ball, by temperament and genius, was best fitted to maintain. The patient, slow, tenacious man held on to the siege with a doggedness which at last completely outwore the fiery valour, and rendered vain the martial skill of the French garrison. The effective siege began on October 12, 1798; the French flag was lowered on September 15, 1800. Here was a siege—or rather a blockade—of nearly two years! The French garrison consisted of 3000 soldiers and marines, while in the harbour lay a formidable squadron—the *Guillaume Tell* of 80 guns (happily escaped from the Nile), two 64's, two frigates of 40 guns, and one of 36. The French ships, late in the siege, made a desperate attempt to break loose, and were captured; but the garrison held out with iron tenacity. Food utterly failed. The cisterns were dried up, disease broke out, and the troops were dying, in the later stages of the siege, at the rate of 100 to 130 a day. The very rats were sold at 10d. each!

But the sufferings of the besiegers were almost as great as those of the besieged. Ball had only a handful of British troops with a loose fringe of irregulars; but, by the magic of his character, he completely won the Maltese, and they served under him with a loyalty and patience beyond all praise.

Ball's serene and dogged hopefulness never failed, though everybody else's did. "During many months," says Coleridge, "he remained the only Englishman who did not think the siege hopeless and the object worthless." One flash of Nelson-like audacity does, indeed, enrich the somewhat drab-coloured patience Ball showed in the conduct of the siege. The Maltese themselves were starving. So sharp was their suffering that one day they rushed the ovens where the scanty supply of bread for the British troops was being baked. At Messina were lying a number of ships laden with corn; but Ball appealed in vain for help to the careless Sicilian Government. The only reply his repeated remonstrances and appeals won was an edict forbidding, under the sharpest penalties, the export of corn from Messina.

Now, for all his mild patience, Ball was an awkward man to drive into a corner. He quietly despatched his senior lieutenant to Messina with instructions to seize—by force, if necessary—the Sicilian corn-ships lying there and bring them to Malta. The audacious feat was carried out with both coolness and despatch, and Ball was able to maintain the siege and outstarve the French; while the Neapolitan authorities did not venture a word of complaint, but only paid the too-presumptuous Ball the compliment of intensely hating him.

Ball adopted one unconsciously humorous device for keeping up the spirits of his officers under the intolerable weariness of the long siege. He made a number of wagers on the fall of the city; made them when the possibility of success seemed almost hopeless. And the capital odds on the issue of the siege his officers had secured gave them a quite new and characteristically British interest in maintaining it. Sir Alexander Ball's genius for managing men may be judged by the success with which he held his curiously composite force of soldiers and sailors — Maltese, Sicilians and British—steadfast to their task through two years of little fighting, of much suffering, and of almost intolerable weariness.

It was at Malta that Ball broke into the mental landscape of Coleridge, and did so with surprising results. Shelley has described Coleridge in some Hudibrastic lines:—

> "He was a mighty poet, and
> A subtle-souled psychologist;
> All things he seemed to understand,
> Of old or new, at sea or land—
> Save his own soul, which was a mist."

That last line describes Coleridge accurately enough, except that the "mist," which he called his soul, was strongly flavoured with opium. Contemplating Ball through the opium-tinted haze

of his own imagination, that honest and simple-minded sailor underwent, to Coleridge's eyes, a strange transformation. He took gigantic proportions. His homely brows, bronzed with the sea winds, were adorned with a nimbus. Coleridge discovered in him all the qualities of the highest genius. He devotes some fifty or sixty pages of *The Friend* to a description of Ball's career and super-eminent merits, and hints that this is only the prelude to an extended biography of his hero, "whose fame," he announces, "was great, but whose worth" — the private discovery of Coleridge, and contemplated through Coleridgean spectacles—"was greater than even his fame."

"Does fortune favour fools?" Coleridge asks; and he goes on to say that he had never known a character in history who owed less to luck and more to merit than Sir Alexander Ball. The seventeen months—from May 1804 to October 1805—during which Coleridge exchanged philosophical reflections with Ball in Malta were, Coleridge announces, "the most memorable and instructive period of my life." When he heard of Ball's death he found tears too mean a tribute to pay to the hero's memory. He was a man, he declares, "above his age. It is impossible not to speak great things of him, and yet difficult to speak what he deserves." It occurs to Coleridge that, possibly,

some stray copy of *The Friend* might find its way to celestial realms, and so the disembodied spirit of Ball might read what he had written about him. In that case Coleridge expresses the pious hope that "his great soul" will not be offended at "the smallness of the offering" the weeping philosopher, after he had dried his spectacles, had laid upon the tomb of his friend!

The truth is that Coleridge was taken captive by those qualities in Ball which were most unlike himself. Coleridge was a dreamer; Ball, a man of action. Coleridge had done nothing since he was born except spin metaphysical subtleties; Ball had fought in the Battle of the Saints; had helped to swell the stormy and dreadful orchestra of the Nile; had driven the French out of Malta by the relentless persistency of his siege. Talking with him, Coleridge seemed to catch an echo of the far-off thunder of guns—a thrill of the spirit and genius of Nelson. So he coruscates in magnificent superlatives over the prosaic and simple-minded sailor, who had an almost childlike delight in philosophical dissertations, but who had also fought in great battles, and played a part in great affairs. As a result Coleridge makes poor Ball almost ridiculous by the flowers of rhetoric with which he adorns him.

Still, he does give some interesting gleams of the

real Ball—his grave simplicity, his piety, his reverence for knowledge, his scorn of mere glitter, his genuine goodness. Ball, he says, did once tell a lie, but it was a bit of generous and almost splendid mendacity! An officer told Coleridge that he was in a boat attack as a middy, with Ball sitting beside him in the stern-sheets. As they came under the fire of the vessel they were attacking, the boy's nerve gave way, and he was on the point of fainting. Ball, then a lieutenant, kept his eyes steadfastly on the ship they were attacking, but took hold of the lad's hand with great gentleness, and said, "Courage! Don't be afraid of yourself. You will recover in a minute or so. *I was just the same when I first went out in this way.*" This latter statement was pure fiction, for Ball was as imperturbable in his first fight as he was at the Nile itself; "but," added the officer who told Coleridge the story, "at the touch of Ball's hand and the cool sound of his kind voice, *it was as if an angel had put a new soul into me.*"

Ball held the wholesome opinion that blusterers were generally cowards; that the quieter the man the better the sailor, and he shared the longing of some old admiral whose chief aspiration was "to have a ship's crew composed altogether of serious Scotchmen"! Ball held that knowledge distinguished man from the animals, and the smaller the

stock of knowledge a man possessed the narrower was the interval that separated him from the brutes. "An ignorant commander," he assured Coleridge, "inspired him with terror." He would either take no advice, and so be ruined by his own want of knowledge, or he would take the worst advice that was offered, and so be ruined by the ignorance of somebody else. Ball's economy of time, says Coleridge, "always demanded my admiration, and not seldom excited my wonder;" but then Coleridge himself was one of the most helpless wasters of time that ever breathed. Coleridge quotes one shrewd saying by Ball. "The courage of an English army," he held, "is the sum total of the courage which the individual soldiers bring with them to it, rather than that which they derive from it." Courage in a British soldier, in a word, is an individual and independent thing; it is not generated by the crowd, and it does not depend on a crowd.

Coleridge gives a vivid picture of the fashion in which Ball—principally because he was so unlike the Maltese—stamped himself on their imagination. To his iron steadfastness in the siege was, no doubt, due their deliverance from the French; and to his serene temper, his obstinate sense of justice, was due their happiness under British rule. Perhaps what clothed the character of Sir Alexander Ball

with almost semi-divine qualities to the Maltese was the contrast it offered to that of the Knights of Malta, who had previously governed the island, and whom Coleridge describes "as being little better than a perpetual influenza, relaxing and diseasing the hearts of all the families within their sphere."

In the poorest Maltese house, says Coleridge, two rude paintings were sure to be found—a picture of the Virgin Mary and a portrait of Sir Alexander Ball. "Whenever he appeared in Valetta, the passengers on each side through the whole length of the street stopped, and remained uncovered till he had passed." Women and children would precede or follow him along the country roads, singing the Maltese song which had been made in his honour, and which was almost as familiar on Maltese lips as "God save the King" is in English gatherings.

Ball's obstinate courage, in brief, won Malta for the English flag; his wise and just administration of the island won the hearts of the Maltese themselves. He died in 1809, and there is a poetic fitness in the circumstance that his body lies in Maltese soil, amongst the people he loved so deeply and ruled so wisely.

CHAPTER IX [1]

SIR JAMES SAUMAREZ (1757–1836)

"*I knew it—I knew it—I knew the man—I knew what he could do! It is the most daring thing that has been done this war. It is the first thing—I knew it would be so.*"
—LORD ST. VINCENT (on hearing of Saumarez's fight with Linois off Algeçiras).

WE were a band of brothers," Nelson said of his captains at the Nile; yet there was one of this heroic band to whom Nelson himself played a somewhat unbrotherly part. This was Sir James Saumarez, who commanded the *Orion* at the Nile, played a brilliant part in the great battle, and must have succeeded to the direction of the fight at its very climax if that unlucky fragment of iron from the *Spartiate* which wounded Nelson had happened to strike his forehead half an inch lower down.

Nelson frankly did not like Saumarez. The two men, in many respects, were almost complete opposites. Nelson's little twisted, one-armed, one-eyed body, with its restless gestures and high-pitched voice, was in almost absurd contrast to the appearance of Saumarez, with his tall figure, his handsome face, his grave and steady manner,

SIR JAMES SAUMAREZ, BART.

From a mezzotint after the portrait by CARBONNIER

his air of soldierly erectness. Nelson had an almost feminine vehemence in his attachments; but he was capable of equally vehement, if short-lived resentments. And in that mood he forgot all justice.

In the case of Saumarez his mood was not exactly that of "resentment." It was an even more deadly thing; a complete and permanent lack of sympathy. Nelson usually fell instantly in love with anybody who performed a particularly daring feat against the French, and he proclaimed his admiration in the most glowing superlatives and the shrillest accents to mankind in general. But even a gallant thing by Saumarez—and he did many gallant things—left Nelson cold.

The quotation at the head of this sketch shows how St. Vincent, the least impulsive of men, was affected by the fashion in which Saumarez bore himself after his first disastrous fight in Algeçiras Bay, and the daring with which he sallied out in pursuit of the combined French and Spanish squadrons six days afterwards, and chased them, with sore loss, into Cadiz. That fine performance lifted even Nelson, for a moment, out of his chilly mood towards Saumarez. "The promptness with which he (Saumarez) refitted," Nelson declared, "the spirit with which he attacked a superior force after his recent disaster, and the masterly conduct of the action I do not think were ever

surpassed." But that was only a flash of Nelson's better and generous self, and it passed like a flash.

A hundred things show Nelson's mood towards Saumarez. When he started on his historic pursuit of Brueys he would certainly have left Saumarez behind, but that he could not spare so fine a ship as the *Orion*. He wanted Troubridge, and not Saumarez, to be his second in command, and Saumarez was slightly Troubridge's senior. At the Nile itself Troubridge, in the *Culloden*, was left stranded on Aboukir Island; and, as far as the actual fight was concerned, there could be no doubt that, by mere right of seniority —to say nothing of the right of pre-eminent fitness—Saumarez was second in command. His very generosity, however, gave Nelson a pretext for robbing him of the reward which belonged to that position. When Saumarez met his brother-captains the day after the fight was over, some of them congratulated him on the honours which must fall to him as second in command. "We all did our duty," cried Saumarez impulsively; "there was no second in command." This was told to Nelson, who caught at the suggestion, and in his despatches treated Saumarez like any other of his captains. Had Saumarez in the *Orion* been lying a stranded and remote spectator from the

fight, and Troubridge with the *Culloden* had lain off the quarter of the *Franklin* during those fiery and dreadful hours of the great night battle, Nelson, it can hardly be doubted, would have taken quite a different view of affairs.

What was the secret of Nelson's obstinate coldness towards so gallant a sailor and so loyal a comrade as Saumarez? The two men, it is true, were totally unlike each other in temperament and genius. But they were not in more complete contrast with each other than, say, Nelson and Ball were. Yet with Ball, Nelson had almost the closest friendship of his life. He never, for example, fell out with Ball as he did with Troubridge. Saumarez and Ball, as a matter of fact, closely resembled each other. Both were bookish men, of placid temper, mild speech, and no sense of humour. Saumarez might have sat with benevolent countenance and lawn sleeves beside Ball on the bench of bishops, and with as little air of incongruity. Saumarez, like Ball, would have been flattered by being allowed to talk windy philosophical generalities with Coleridge; and he could have shown towards the Maltese a passionless equity such as that by which Ball won their confidence.

There was one point, however, in which Ball and Saumarez differed; and it was exactly at that

point, that Nelson's sympathies for the ablest and one of the most gallant seamen under his command, fell into hopeless wreck. Nelson was generous of admiration; but he was greedy of it, too. And while both Saumarez and Ball admired their famous admiral, Ball's admiration was of the loudly vocal sort, such as Nelson loved; that of Saumarez was inarticulate. Ball could pay long visits to Merton Place; and, while Lady Hamilton fluted melodiously in adoration of Nelson, could supply a rumbling marine accompaniment to that somewhat obese charmer's performance; and the duet delighted Nelson! Saumarez never put his head under the roof of Merton Place. He would probably have "cut" Lady Hamilton had they met. And he was apt to offer Nelson, not compliments, but advice. He was a year older than Nelson, it must be remembered; was of a didactic turn, and neither shared Nelson's wayward moods nor comprehended them.

One amusing example of how Saumarez ruffled Nelson's nerves with perfectly sound but somewhat misdated reflections yet survives. On the second morning after the fight at the Nile, Saumarez went on board the *Vanguard* to congratulate Nelson on his victory. Nelson had a bandaged head, Saumarez a bandaged thigh and side, and both men, it may be guessed, were in

that mood of nervous reaction which succeeds the strain and passion of such a battle as that through which they had just passed. After a few remarks had been exchanged, Saumarez began to be didactic. "It was unfortunate," he said, "we did not—" But he never got any further. He meant to add, "all anchor on the same side;" but Nelson, with his usual selfish quickness, guessed the yet unspoken half of the criticism, and flashed out in reply: "Thank God, there was no order," and disappeared from the quarterdeck in the direction of his cabin! Saumarez might have been able to say a good deal in behalf of his interrupted criticism. Two British ships firing from opposite sides into an unhappy Frenchman must almost necessarily fire into each other. They might have done equal mischief to the enemy, with less risk to themselves, if they had been anchored on the bow and quarter of each Frenchman instead of on opposite sides. The Frenchmen in that case could have fought with only one broadside instead of two. This was, in fact, an ancient matter of debate between Saumarez and Nelson. "It never required two English ships to capture one French," Saumarez would argue. It is certain that at the Nile many British seamen were slain by shot fired from British guns. The process of doubling

on part of the French line, too, left part of the enemy's force unoccupied. No one could have calculated beforehand that Villeneuve, at the rear of the French line, would watch the head of that line destroyed, ship by ship,[1] and never stir. Suppose the four rearmost French ships had slipped their cables when the fight began, and made sail to windward? They would certainly have destroyed the stranded *Culloden*, and might have cut off the *Swiftsure* and *Alexander* coming up to the fight. All this was debatable, and Saumarez was disposed to argue it!

But to criticise the Nile the day after it was fought, and to Nelson himself, and on the quarter-deck of his own ship, was a very unhappy and ill-timed performance. It illustrates what may be called the pedagogic strain in Saumarez, and helps to explain why Nelson never succeeded in being quite just to him.

Yet Saumarez is one of the great seamen of that great age; a most gallant fighter; a man who, beneath his mild speech and calm temper, hid an heroic spirit, and an ideal of duty, which had something classic and antique about it. He had not, indeed, that indefinable thrill of original genius which makes Nelson the most famous of all British sailors. But, for plain downright fighting, Saumarez was almost the equal of Nelson;

and in mere technical seamanship he was probably his superior. Both Ball and Saumarez, it must be remembered, rode unharmed through that wild gale off the Sardinian coast when the *Vanguard* under Nelson was more than half dismasted. Of Saumarez's daring and scientific seamanship many examples might be given.

In 1794, for instance, he was in command of a small squadron of frigates and lighter ships guarding the narrow waters between the Channel Islands and the French coast. He fell in with a much heavier force of the enemy, and skilfully drew off with his tiny squadron in the direction of Guernsey. The French ships carried nearly three times his weight of metal, and they were quick as well as heavy. A fight was practically hopeless, and it seemed certain that the slower ships of the little British squadron must be captured. Saumarez, in this crisis, had recourse to very audacious tactics. He shortened sail in his own frigate, the *Crescent*, while the other British ships ran off before the wind. The *Crescent* carried only 36 guns; the French squadron consisted of two frigates of 36 guns, and two raised two-deckers, carrying 54 guns each. Saumarez was apparently sacrificing himself to secure the escape of the ships under his command. But he daintily feinted with the eager Frenchmen; he even closed

with them and ran along their line, risking what seemed inevitable destruction. But he was sure both of his ship and of his own skill, ran the gauntlet of distant gun-fire safely, and then bore up straight for the rocky Guernsey shore.

Guernsey was his birthplace; he knew the swift currents and splintered rocks of the coast-line perfectly; and he ran straight for a tiny passage into which no ship of the size of the *Crescent* had ever yet been steered. The feat required steady nerves and flawless skill. His pilot, a Guernsey fisherman, stood beside Saumarez conning the ship through the rocks. "Are you sure you can see the marks?" asked Saumarez. "Yes," said the pilot, "for there is your house and there is my own!" The narrow and perilous track by which the *Crescent* was escaping her enemies ran, in fact, within sight of the home of Saumarez. The high daring, the generous self-sacrifice, the cool and skilful seamanship, shown in that feat are characteristic of Saumarez.

Another illustration of superb seamanship is supplied from a later period of Saumarez's career. The British seaman of that day had at least the most splendid of practical trainings. He was fused like steel in the red flame of battle, and then chilled to perfect temper in the tedious cruises, the storms and monotony of long winter block-

ades. In 1800, Saumarez, flying his flag in the *Cæsar*, was in command of the advanced squadron blockading Brest. His post was off what was known as the Black Rocks, the most stormy point on a stormy coast. It bore the name of "New Siberia" in the vernacular of the British forecastles. Day and night Saumarez and the squadron under his command had to cruise to and fro amid treacherous currents and sunken rocks, six ships keeping watch at the entrance of the port in which lay twenty-five sail of the line ready for sea. St. Vincent, who, with the main body of the British fleet, was cruising off Ushant, wrote to Saumarez that while he stood sentry over the Frenchmen, "I sleep as soundly as if I had the key of Brest in my possession."

Saumarez justified that trust magnificently. He hung on to his post off the Black Rocks with iron tenacity. Blow high or blow low, his grip at the throat of Brest never relaxed. For fifteen weeks, in all weathers, his watch was so strict that nothing with sails either entered or left Brest harbour. On November 9 a gale of memorable violence blew, but could not blow Saumarez from his post.

He was relieved for a time, but on March 7, 1801, he was at his old post off the Black Rocks again. On the 20th the wild equinoctial gales were howling over land and sea; it was impossible to keep on the

blockading ground, and the British ships in such weather were accustomed to take refuge in Torbay, and temporarily abandon the blockade. Saumarez, however, adopted a more audacious policy. He ran into Douvarnanez Bay, a little curve in the French coast itself, within five miles of Brest, and commanding the entrance to Brest harbour. The exasperated Frenchmen regarded this as a surpassing bit of impudence. This audacious Englishman was making French soil itself his ally; he was using the shelter of a French port to blockade French ships! There were now thirty-two line-of-battle ships in Brest harbour, but they dare not run out while Saumarez and his six ships hung on their flank. They could only express their feelings by opening a distant and wrathful, but quite harmless fire on the impertinent Englishmen. All other British ships were driven from the station; Saumarez and his little squadron alone held to their post. It was a triumph of pluck and seamanship.

It is interesting to study the process by which so fine a seaman as Saumarez was evolved. He was born in Guernsey, and so, in a sense, was a child of the stormy Channel, familiar with it from his very birth. Norman blood ran in his veins, and sea and salt was in them too. One uncle was Anson's first lieutenant. Another sailor uncle won fame by a quite remarkable feat. He was on guard off

Bristol, in command of the *Antelope* of 50 guns, when the news came that a big Frenchman had anchored under Lundy Island. The *Antelope* set sail at once, sighted the foe, closed with him and opened fire. With the first sound of the English guns the French flag was hauled down, and the *Belliqueux*, of 64 guns and 500 men, surrendered, without firing a shot, to the *Antelope* of 50 guns and 350 men. The French captain it seems had contemplated the *Antelope* through alarmed magnifying glasses. Its approach was so resolute and menacing that the unhappy captain of the *Belliqueux* was sure that it could be nothing less than a three-decker. When he came on board his captor's ship and realised its true dimensions, he demanded furiously to be allowed to go back to his own ship and fight it out! The *Antelope* brought back its mammoth prize to Bristol after a cruise of only eighteen hours.

In a family with such traditions, and set in such an environment, the sea was the obvious career for any boy. Young Saumarez had his name entered on the books of the *Soleby* when he was only ten years old, and it remained there for nearly three years; though its owner during that period was only a boy in knickerbockers, struggling in a dame's school through the earlier rules of the Latin grammar. Late in 1769, young Saumarez, with nearly

three years' sea-service to his credit, though he had never yet put his foot upon a ship of war, joined the *Montreal*, and began his actual career. In his first cruise he was five years away from home on duty without once returning. He first saw actual war in 1775, on the American coast. He was a very youthful lieutenant when, on June 28, 1776, he took part in the attack on Fort Sullivan. It was a bit of desperate fighting; his ship alone lost 111 in killed and wounded. The fight lasted thirteen hours, and ended in failure; and Saumarez years afterwards, when he had heard the thunders of St. Vincent and of the Nile, declared that those bloody hours at Fort Sullivan were fiercer and more desperate than any fighting these great battles yielded.

In 1778 a bit of good fortune befell Saumarez, which made him count himself the luckiest, if almost the most youthful, lieutenant in the British navy. He was appointed to the command of the *Spitfire* galley, with a modest crew of thirty-seven men, and sent to cruise off Rhode Island, to intercept the American coasting trade. The weather was wild, the coast rough, the enemy enterprising, and, under the command of Saumarez, the little *Spitfire* was engaged with the enemy no less than forty-seven times. It was a splendid school for the young sailor, and explains the perfect seamanship

and steadfast daring which, throughout his whole career, were the characteristics of Saumarez. He returned to England later, served in the *Victory*, the flagship of the Channel fleet, for two years, and, under Sir Hyde Parker, took part in the distracted but obstinate fight with the Dutchmen off the Dogger Bank in 1781. Hyde Parker was known in all the forecastles and gun-rooms of the fleet as "Vinegar" Parker, for the quality of his temper; but the sour old admiral fell in love with Saumarez, and offered to take him with him in the *Cato* to the Indian station, where he was to hoist his flag. Saumarez, fortunately, refused the offer, and the *Cato*, with "Vinegar" Parker and all its crew, sailed, and was never heard of again. The great ship is supposed to have perished off the Cape of Good Hope.

Saumarez, in command of the *Tisiphone* fireship, under Kempenfeldt—who afterwards disappeared from history in the *Royal George*—saw service in the West Indies, was posted—almost by accident—to the *Russell*, a fine 74, and took part under Rodney in the great battle of that admiral with De Grasse on April 12, 1782. A post-captain at twenty-five, and in the line of battle under Rodney, with a French fleet commanded by one of the most famous of French admirals, under his lee! Here again was luck, and Saumarez showed him-

self worthy of his good fortune. He fought and disabled a French 74 on his own account, and afterwards helped to compel De Grasse's flagship, the *Ville de Paris*, to strike. The *Ville de Paris*, it must be remembered, was one of the finest ships afloat, and up to that date was the only French first-rate that ever had been captured and carried into port.

Peace now came, and with it came, for Saumarez, the tameness of half-pay and the apparent end of his career. The youthful captain consoled himself by marriage; but in 1793 came the outbreak of the great war, and Saumarez was appointed to the *Crescent* of 36 guns, and despatched to cruise in the Channel. He contributed to the great war almost its first and most brilliant naval feat. A French frigate was in the habit of creeping out of Cherbourg under cover of the darkness, capturing a few vagrant British merchantmen, and returning to Cherbourg with her prizes next morning. This was an agreeable entertainment which Saumarez proposed to interrupt. On the morning of October 20 the *Crescent*, under reefed topsails, was close to the lighthouse off Cape Barfleur. The Frenchman, a fine frigate, the *Reunion*, heavier in tonnage and weight of broadside than the *Crescent*, and carrying nearly a hundred more men, had completed its nightly tour and was returning to the French coast, when

it found itself cut off by the *Crescent*. The English frigate, clean from dock, was the quicker ship, and soon ran down within pistol shot of the enemy's larboard quarter. A very pretty fight followed. It was watched by crowds on the French coast, and was marked by exquisite seamanship on the part of Saumarez. The Frenchman struck after a fight of two hours, and with a loss of 120 killed and wounded. So wild, however, was the shooting of the Frenchman, and so adroit was the seamanship of Saumarez, that the *Crescent* had not a single man hit! A British sailor had, indeed, a broken leg; but this was due, not to a French shot, but to the recoil of an English gun. There is hardly any other example in naval history of a fight in which all the killed and wounded were on one side. A single shot from the *Crescent* entered the starboard quarter of the *Reunion*, and made its exit at the larboard bow, killing and wounding twenty-one men in its progress.

That splendid feat won knighthood for Saumarez. The fight, indeed, between the *Crescent* and the *Reunion* deserves to be classed with that betwixt the *Nymph* and the *Cleopatra*; but the odds, on the whole, were greater against Saumarez than against Pellew, and the *Nymph* had not the bloodless victory that the *Crescent* won. These two sea duels, however, had a significance quite in excess

of the scale of the forces engaged in them. They seemed to determine, at the outset of the great struggle, the supremacy of England on the sea.

For Saumarez there now followed a period of difficult service in command of a squadron of frigates watching the Channel; but he was quite unlike another famous captain of his time—Blackwood of the *Euryalus*. He disliked frigate service, though it meant larger freedom and more prize-money. The stately line-of-battle ship, with its strict discipline and ordered tactics, suited him best, and in March 1795 he was posted to the *Orion*, the ship which was destined to carry his flag through two historic battles, St. Vincent and the Nile.

At St. Vincent the *Orion* came third in Jervis' line, following the proud lead of the *Culloden* and the *Prince George*. Saumarez played a gallant part in the fierce mêlée between the four leading British ships and the main body of the Spaniards. He fought a three-decker, the *Salvador del Mundo*, for an hour, compelled her to strike, and sent his first lieutenant on board to take possession; while the *Orion* itself, bearing many scars from Spanish shot, stood on in search of new foes. Saumarez's own story is: "I stood for a three-decker, which, after engaging some time, struck her colours; she first showed a white flag, which . . . was not satisfac-

tory to myself, and we continued firing till they hoisted the English flag over the Spanish, on which we ceased firing." As the last guns on the *Orion* were fired, and Saumarez was about to take possession of his huge prize, Jervis signalled his fleet to wear and come to the wind. Saumarez obeyed the signal, and left his capture unappropriated, and had the mortification of seeing it, after a pause, rehoist the Spanish colours. The lost prize, it turned out, was the *Santissima Trinidada* itself, the biggest battle-ship afloat, and destined to meet Nelson again on the day of a yet more famous battle. To capture and take possession of one three-decker, and to compel the biggest ship under the enemy's flag to strike, was surely a splendid contribution to even the glories of St. Vincent.

The *Orion*, again, formed part of the immortal fleet which, under Nelson, twice crossed the Mediterranean in pursuit of Brueys, and finally destroyed him in the great fight in Aboukir Bay. A little before noon on the day of battle, the reconnoitring ship signalled that the enemy was not in the port of Alexandria, and dinner that day was a melancholy meal in every gun-room of the fleet. "Despondency," says even the equable-minded Saumarez, "nearly took possession of my mind, and I do not recollect ever to have felt so utterly

hopeless and out of spirits as when we sat down to dinner." They had missed the Frenchmen again! But just then came a gleam of good news: "Judge," cries Saumarez, "what a change took place when, as the cloth was being removed, the officer of the watch came running in saying, 'Sir, a signal is just now made that the enemy is in Aboukir Bay, and moored in a line of battle.'" The officers round the dinner-table leaped to their feet, the glasses were uplifted to drink "success" in the coming fight, and then they hurried on deck. As Saumarez stepped from his cabin, his crew, who were eagerly looking for him, broke into a tumult of stern and exultant shouts. That almost involuntary and eager shout was a good omen for the coming battle.

The *Orion* was the third English ship that rounded the head of the French line. She poured a shattering broadside into the already sorely shattered bows of the *Guerrier*, and then passed outside her predecessors, the *Zealous* and the *Goliath*. Saumarez was conning his ship and choosing his particular antagonist with great deliberation, when a French frigate, the *Serieuse*, with more courage than judgment, fired a hurried but venomous broadside into the English 74. Battle itself has its iron etiquette. In an engagement a line-of-battle ship does not fire upon any smaller craft without special

provocation. The first lieutenant of the *Orion* proposed to at once return the fire of the audacious frigate. "No," said Sir James coolly, "let her alone. She will get courage and come nearer. Shorten sail!" As the *Orion* lost way, the French frigate came up almost alongside, preparing to fire again. The *Orion's* starboard guns were double-shotted; and at the moment when every gun bore on the too-enterprising Frenchman, the word "Fire" was given. That single broadside sank the Frenchman.

Saumarez meanwhile had stood on, and having fired a broadside into the fourth ship in the French line, brought up on the quarter of *Le Peuple Souverain*, and on the bow of the *Franklin*, the fifth and sixth ships respectively in Brueys' line. It was a position which delighted the crew of the *Orion*. They could fire on two Frenchmen at once, each bigger than themselves, to say nothing of firing an occasional broadside into Brueys' flagship, the gigantic *L'Orient* itself.

It was a quarter to seven when the anchor of the *Orion* was dropped, and she fired her first guns into the *Franklin*. At half-past eight *Le Peuple Souverain* had dropped out of the line to leeward, but the duel with the *Franklin* lasted till a quarter to ten, or thereabouts, when the Frenchman struck. Then came the dramatic moment of the battle.

The *Orient* blew up, and hushed the tumult of the combat with the sound of its mighty explosion. It is a somewhat prosaic detail that the next business of the *Orion* was to fish out of the water some fourteen of the unhappy crew of the *Orient*, the British tars, with rough kindness, attiring their half-drowned enemies in their own jackets and trousers.

A week after the great fight Saumarez was detailed with a small squadron to convoy the captured French ships to Gibraltar or to Lisbon. Never was a business which so taxed the patience and skill of a seaman as this. The battered ships with difficulty could be persuaded to either wear or tack. They resembled nothing so much as a covey of broken-winged birds. The weather alternated between calms—when the great shot-battered hulls lay motionless—and gusts of rough weather, when they drifted helplessly to leeward like so many empty barrels. Saumarez's log reflects almost amusingly the exasperations and delays of that voyage. With the most skilful seamanship it took more than two months to bring that strange convoy from Alexandria to Gibraltar, a distance of 2100 miles; an average rate of 35 miles a day.

The most memorable incident in Saumarez's career is of course the double fight with Linois in and off, Algeciras Bay. He was now a rear-admiral

with the *Cæsar* for his flagship. A powerful squadron of Spanish line-of-battle ships was lying at Cadiz. News reached the Admiralty that a French squadron from Toulon was on its way to join the Spanish ships, with a view to a descent on the coast of Portugal; or perhaps to the relief of the French army in Eygpt. Saumarez sailed on June 14 to blockade Cadiz, and prevent the junction of the squadrons. On July 5 he learned that Linois' squadron was actually in Gibraltar Bay. Saumarez acted with admirable promptitude. He left one ship, the *Superb*, to keep watch over the Spaniards in Cadiz harbour, and sailed instantly to attack the Frenchmen. July 6 was a Sunday. It was certain that the morning would bring a battle; but eleven o'clock was the ordinary hour for public service in the ships, and Saumarez was not the man to intermit this unless the guns were actually speaking. So on the flagship was seen the sight of the crew in white—they were serving in a warm climate—in divisions on the quarterdeck, a band of marines on the poop, the admiral and his officers under the poop awning, and all the solemnities of religious worship, with the enemy only a few miles distant.

Linois, with three ships of the line and a frigate, was moored off Algeçiras, six miles distant from Gibraltar. The so-called bay is a little curve of

shallow water, sown with rocks. The shore was lined with heavy batteries, under which Linois, with great skill, had anchored his ships. Fourteen Spanish gunboats had joined the French; and the task before Saumarez was one of great difficulty. He had to fight not merely the ships, but the batteries, and to do this in shallow water sown with perils. His greatest difficulty was due to the fact that the wind was so light that the British ships had little or no power of manœuvring. They drifted, rather than sailed, down on the French line. But the British saw their enemies before them, and closed with them as resolutely, if not so quickly, as at the Nile itself.

Hood led in the *Venerable*, and there was a look of majesty in the slow and silent approach of the great British ships. At half-past eight three were within reach of the enemy, and had opened fire. At nine o'clock the *Cæsar* added the deep voice of her big guns to the fray, and, moving slowly ahead of the *Venerable*, dropped anchor. The other two British ships, practically becalmed, had anchored outside their comrades, and could only fire through the gaps in the British line. At ten o'clock the French fire had slackened so much that Saumarez was on the point of sending in a flag of truce to the Spanish batteries, proposing to spare the town if he were allowed to take away the French ships. What

had really happened, however, was a very clever bit of tactics on the part of the French admiral. He was quietly warping his ships closer inshore, for the purpose of drawing the British ships more directly under the fire of the batteries. One of the British ships—the *Pompée*—having broken her sheer, was thrown by a flaw of the wind stern-on to the French admiral, and was raked with dreadful effect, and had to be towed off by the boats of the squadron.

The French by this had greatly increased their distance from the British, and Saumarez had to choose between abandoning the fight and making the almost hopeless attempt to close with his enemies. He chose the more daring course. He signalled to his ships to cut or slip their cables, and make sail to close with the enemy. But there was not wind enough to carry the British ships on to the enemy's line. A breath of wind, it is true, caught the sails of the *Hannibal*, and its captain, Ferris, with signal coolness and audacity, tried to place his ship between the French flagship, the *Formidable*, and the shore. But a stroke of fatal ill-luck befell him. The *Hannibal* grounded heavily, directly under the stroke of the great battery on the cliff, and under the raking broadsides of the *Formidable*. Ferris sent his men below to escape the tempest of grape which swept the

deck of the *Hannibal*, and held on till the ship was riddled and nearly 180 of his crew had been killed or wounded; then he lowered his flag.

The other British ships, meanwhile, had tried in vain to reach the French line. Saumarez would have landed his marines to storm the batteries, but every boat in the squadron that could float was employed in towing off the *Pompée* or in hurrying to the help of the *Hannibal*. At last Saumarez drew off his battered ships and bore up for repairs into Gibraltar.

The triumph of the French may be imagined. They had beaten off a British squadron of double their own strength and had captured a British 74! There had been no other such triumph won under the French flag since the war began. Much dispute subsequently arose as to whether Saumarez had drawn off before the *Hannibal* struck, and whether everything possible had been done to assist that unfortunate ship. The dispute was due mainly to the curious difference between French and British practice. The British, when they captured a French ship, were accustomed to hoist the Union Jack above the tricolour. The French plan was to hoist the English ensign union downwards. Now, the French so seldom captured an English ship that this custom was almost un-

known to British sailors themselves; while the ensign, union down, is of course the accepted signal of distress. It is true that the ensign union down was flying from the *Hannibal* when Saumarez drew off; but it was not an appeal for help from that ship, only a sign that the French were in possession. The British boats, in fact, reached the stranded ship when the French were actually on board, and were themselves made prisoners.

In the court-martial which followed, Colonel Connolly, who was on board the *Hannibal*, gave evidence that "no signal of distress was hoisted by the *Hannibal* at all, but the French hoisted the ensign union down when they came on board." He added, "The boats from our ships did not get near us till after we were in the possession of the enemy; and I called to an old shipmate of mine, in the *Venerable's* barge, and told him so, as he came under the starboard quarter; but he persisted in coming on board, and was taken. A good many English boats were taken in the same way." The obstinate courage shown by the *Venerable's* barge may well be admired, though it sadly needed to be flavoured with a little more discretion.

Meanwhile at Gibraltar Saumarez was labouring with intense diligence and admirable skill in re-

fitting his shattered ships; and never before was a squadron of half-destroyed ships restored to fighting condition with such speed. Linois, on his part, had summoned the Spaniards in Cadiz to join him. He had beaten six British ships with three, he explained, capturing one of his enemies; if the Spaniards joined him he would convey his prize in triumph into Cadiz. The Spanish admiral Morino, with five sail of the line and three frigates, promptly came out on the 9th, sailed past Gibraltar, and joined Linois off Algeciras. The British sailors knew that this represented a plan for convoying the captured *Hannibal* in triumph into Cadiz, and they toiled with passionate energy, but in disciplined and silent order, to fit their ships for a fresh engagement.

At half-past two on July 12 the *Cæsar* hauled off the mole, a band playing "Cheer up, my lads! 'tis to glory we steer": the bandsmen of the garrison on the mole-head, meanwhile, almost bursting their distended cheeks and their very drum-heads by the energy they poured into the answering strain of "Britons! Strike Home." An hour earlier the enemy's ships had been seen beyond Cabrita Point, working slowly out of the bay, before a fresh east wind, towards Cadiz. One British ship, the *Pompée*, was left behind, her

injuries being beyond repair, while Linois' force had been more than trebled by the junction of six Spanish line-of-battle ships and three frigates; and two of the Spaniards, it may be noted, were three-deckers. The odds, therefore, were now much heavier against the British than five days before. It was a case of five ships pursuing nine.

The combined fleet bore proudly away, the crippled *Hannibal* jealously guarded in its centre. The wind was freshening; but it was nearly nine o'clock before the British fleet had worked clear of the bay, and was following. The *Superb* was by far the quickest ship under Saumarez, and he directed its captain, Keats, to spread every inch of canvas, overtake the rearmost ships of the enemy, and bring them to action. Then followed one of the most dramatic incidents in naval history.

A little after eleven o'clock the *Superb* overtook the two Spanish three-deckers, dragging heavily in Linois' rear, their tall sails showing with ghost-like effect, high in the darkness. The quickly-moving *Superb* glided between them, fired a broadside into each, pushed on, and in a few moments was lost in the darkness ahead. The two great Spaniards, each smitten in this fashion with a fierce broadside out of the gloom, fired wildly in return on each other. The wind was

now rising fast, a heavy sea had begun to roll, the two Spaniards drifted nearer to each other, firing furiously. They had lain long in port under the Cadiz sun, both canvas and woodwork were as dry as tinder. Flames broke out on each; they leaped from sail to sail. The red fire ran along the crowded decks. A dozen tiny explosions told where a pile of cartridges had been touched by the red tongue of the flames. Each ship was quickly one vast and drifting pyramid of flame. A little after midnight one great three-decker blew up, the second quickly followed; and out of their combined crews, numbering nearly 2000 men, only a handful escaped! The *Superb*, meanwhile, had pushed on and was busily engaged with another enemy, which presently struck.

The morning broke on a wild scene. A heavy sea was running: the sky was full of blowing clouds; the *Venerable* was closing with a French line-of-battle ship, when she grounded on a shoal and her foremast went by the board, her mizzenmast quickly following. Her case seemed hopeless, and a boat was sent from the *Cæsar* with instructions to Hood that, if he could not get his ship off the shoal, he was to set fire to her and carry his crew to the *Thames*. Brenton, who took the order, tells how he found Hood sitting on the breech of a gun on his quarterdeck with

perfect cheerfulness. "It is not so bad yet with the old *Venerable*," he said; "I hope to get her off soon. These rascals shall not have her." He succeeded in floating the *Venerable* again, and she was towed by the *Spencer* into Gibraltar, the enemy meanwhile having succeeded in reaching Cadiz.

Saumarez returned in triumph to Gibraltar. He had not recaptured the *Hannibal*, it is true, but he brought a Spanish 74 as a prize; he had destroyed two Spanish three-deckers, and defeated the designs of the French. Linois, with the Spaniards, was safely blockaded in Cadiz. Perhaps no finer bit of work was ever done by British sailors than was accomplished by Saumarez and his squadron in those seven days of intense toil and hard fighting between Algeçiras and Cadiz. The strain upon the crews of the ships may be judged from the circumstance that, when the ships dropped anchor at Gibraltar, the men flung themselves down on the deck in a sort of stupor of exhaustion that lasted for hours.

This was, practically, the last bit of hard fighting in Saumarez's career. But for five years he was in command of the Baltic, and by his tact, vigilance, and sagacity, he held the Baltic powers steady to the alliance against France, and kept the sea itself free from French control, and so

contributed materially, if not in a dramatic fashion, to the overthrow of Napoleon and the triumphant close of the great war.

Saumarez lived for many peaceful years after the war had ceased, and in Guernsey his "good grey head" was as well known, and drew to itself as much of reverence, as that of Wellington in the streets of London. He was a man of deep and modest piety, and his death was one of singular peace. Fragments of the Psalms were whispered by his dying lips: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; of whom, then, shall I be afraid?" Sometimes the nobler strains of the Epistles took their place: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The last syllables on his lips, uttered with clear and triumphant accents, were a fragment of the metrical version of the 122nd Psalm: "It was a joyful sound to hear;" and Sir John Ross, his biographer, suggests that on the dying sailor's ear had fallen a strain of the far-off music of heaven. It is certainly remarkable that those ears that had once been filled with the stormy tumult of St. Vincent and of the Nile, and of many another great fight, thrilled at last to a music so divine and unearthly.

On a hill in Guernsey rises an obelisk ninety feet high in memory of Sir James Saumarez. It looks down on the rock-edged coast, on the restless waters

of the Channel, on the dim and far-off coast of France. It is a fitting monument to the great seaman, whose boyhood was spent in the green valleys beneath, and who served his race so nobly on that grey floor of sea beyond.

CHAPTER X

SIR WILLIAM PARKER (1781–1866)

"*No one I think so fortunate as myself; the finest frigate in the navy at the beginning of the war.*"—WILLIAM PARKER (ætat. twenty-one).

"*The best frigate-captain in the service.*"—SIR PULTENEY MALCOLM.

WILLIAM PARKER, in a sense, is not one of "Nelson's captains," though for a short time he commanded a frigate under Nelson's flag. He does not belong to the same group with Saumarez and Ball and Hardy, or even with Berry and Blackwood. He never commanded a line-of-battle ship till many years after Nelson was dead; and, except as a boy under Howe, he never saw two great fleets closing on each other in battle. But he belongs to Nelson's school, and he brought down to a later generation not merely the splendid traditions of that school, but many of its splendid qualities.

St. Vincent himself was a close connection—his uncle by marriage and cousin by blood—and Parker was in one respect the heir of St. Vincent's pro-

fessional ideals. He had, without his sternness, his high conception of discipline; his sense of the value of silence, order, and thoroughness as elements of discipline. And when he flew his flag as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean late in the forties, he raised the discipline of his fleet to a level which became memorable. In the unbuttoned vernacular alike of the gun-room and of the forecastle what was done "in old Billy Parker's time" was an authoritative standard for what ought to be done always and everywhere. But this was the later Parker; Parker grown old, oracular, official. It is the youthful Parker who is worth studying as an example of the younger school of seamen who grew up under the shadow of Nelson's name, and were moulded by Nelson's spirit.

And certainly as a picture of the life of a young naval officer in the time of the great war nothing can well be more interesting and suggestive than Parker's career. It was a life of constant adventure, of quick-succeeding incident, of chases and captures, of adroit stratagems, of daring boat attacks, of fat prizes. Parker belongs to the class from which Marryat and Michael Scott drew their heroes. In one sense, indeed, he was quite unlike the Tom Cringles, the Frank Mildmays, and the Percival Keenes, who have delighted so many generations

of British school-boys. There was no strain of the pickle in him. He was a decorous, almost solemn-minded, not to say priggish youth. A touch of the delightful and unsmiling simplicity of Peter Simple was in him. He was as commercially-minded in the matter of prizes as a Dutch merchant might have been, and constantly reckons up to his mother how much this or that particular capture will yield him. He assesses each cruising ground, and cruise, in turn, by the question of whether it is profitable or not; and most of them, it may be added, were surprisingly profitable. "I fancy I have made £500 this cruise," he assures his "dearest mother," when he was only twenty years old. Still earlier, when he is only nineteen, he is able to tell his "dearest sisters," "My last cruise in the *Stork* will clear me, I believe, £500." From the *Stork* again, on September 15, 1801, returning from a cruise of fifteen weeks, he writes to his mother, "I fancy I have made nearly £3000."

Parker's early career represents, in a word, what may be called the Marryat aspect of naval war in Nelson's time; not on its frolicsome side —it is doubtful whether Parker was ever guilty of a practical joke in his life—but on its fighting side. Here is an English boy of an ordinary type, without shining gifts of brain or body. He is a

clean-minded lad, because he has breathed from his birth the atmosphere of a pure home. Good family traditions act upon him like a tonic. He is the nephew of the man who won the great fight off Cape St. Vincent. At an age when most modern lads have hardly begun their school life, he is put on the quarterdeck of a man-of-war. The sea is his world; the ship is his school. His comrades are seamen, his officers are his teachers, war is his business. They are not the dull days of peace through which he lives. Each new morning may bring a new chase, a fresh adventure, a rich capture. It is the navy in the days of Nelson, of the Nile, of Copenhagen, of Trafalgar. And young Parker does not belong to the heavy battalions of the fleet. He is not cruising in a three-decker for tedious months off Brest or Toulon. His life is spent in light ships —in frigates and sloops—and in outpost work; hunting for fat prizes amongst the heavy-bottomed merchant ships of France or Spain; clearing the Channel of French privateers, or exterminating pirates in the warm seas of the West Indies.

Parker was, no doubt, greatly helped in his career by family influence; helped indeed to a degree which nowadays would be considered scandalous. But he took his profession seriously, brought to it a high ideal of duty, and had some

fine natural gifts, or he could never have made himself what Sir Pulteney Malcolm declared him to be, "the finest frigate captain in the service." He began his career at the tender age of ten years, with the rating of "captain's servant" on the *Orion*. Sir John Jervis—not yet Lord St. Vincent—helped to secure him this start, but did it with a touch of morose reluctance. He tells young Parker's father that he cannot possibly recommend him to put his son in the navy; it will cost too much, and the career will yield too little; but never was a more mistaken forecast! Jervis goes on to explain that he will not be able to help the lad, as he is himself approaching threescore, and will be soon past helping anybody; and as, "from the aspect of foreign affairs, there is small probability of any war arising," young Parker, he adds, is not likely to enjoy any chances of helping himself. This is an example of human short-sightedness which it would be hard, indeed, to beat. England was at that moment on the verge of the Twenty Years' war; over its fleets were about to break the glories of the Nile, the Baltic, and Trafalgar. In less than five years after writing that letter Jervis himself was winning the great fight off Cape St. Vincent.

Young Parker was very fortunate in his first captain, Duckworth. He belonged to the period

when the captain was half father and half schoolmaster to his middies; and Jervis himself describes Duckworth as "the very best man in the navy for training youth." In an early and very boyish letter to his mother Parker tells her that "Captain Duckworth is like a father to us all." He bought sweets for his middies, and looked with semi-maternal concern after their bedding. His aunt gives the eleven-year-old middy—or rather "captain's servant"—a guinea; and he tells his mother "I shall give this to Captain Duckworth, as I have my other money, as well as my watch and spy-glass, to be taken care of."

But this eleven-year-old boy was quickly caught in the tumult of a great sea-battle. His ship formed part of Lord Howe's fleet on the First of June. He writes to his mother the day after the battle telling her "not to alarm yourself about me, as I am sound, well, and happy as a king. The engagement was the severest that ever was fought in the whole world. I do not cram you at all by telling you so. . . . I forgot to tell you that we have conquered the rascals."

The story of the First of June has been told a hundred times over by grave historians, but young Parker's letter to his father, written on June 17, 1794, enables us to see what aspect a great battle wears when looked at through a boy's

eyes. First we have this picture from the preliminary fight on May 29:—

"*The enemy fired chiefly at our rigging trying to dismast us, and we at their hulls, which we thought the best way of weakening them. It was surprising to see with what courage our men behaved; there were even some of them so eager that they jumped up in the rigging to huzza, and Captain Duckworth hauled them down by the legs (I mean the brave fighting cool Duckworth). We had not fired two broadsides before an unlucky shot cut a poor man's head right in two, and wounded Jno. Fane and four other youngsters like him very slightly. The horrid sight of this poor man I must confess did not help to raise my spirits. At twelve the bold and brave Admiral Gardner, according to custom, broke their line, upon which our ship's company gave three hearty cheers at their quarters; we then passed the whole of the French line, and were exposed to a very smart and close cannonading from the enemy, which we returned with very great warmth. We then lay-to to repair our rigging a little, when seeing their sternmost ship of eighty guns a little way ahead we bore up for her, and running close under her weather quarter let fly a broadside into her, which raked her fore and aft, and so effectually that it made the Frenchmen, according to custom, run from their quarters and huddle together down*

below, and the French captain was the only person seen upon deck, which he walked very resolutely and put every one of his men to sword whom he saw fly."

Of the historic fight on June 1, here is what a boy tells:—

"*Lord Howe always likes to begin in the morning and let us have a whole day at it. The next morning early the signal was made to form the line of battle; we beat to quarters and got up sufficiently of powder and shot to engage the enemy. The enemy also formed their line to leeward. Upon our making observations on the enemy's fleet we found that one of their three-deck ships were missing, but counted twenty-eight sail-of-the-line, which was two more than they had on May* 29. *We supposed the Isle d'Aix squadron had joined them, and the ship that we had disabled on the* 29*th had bore up for Brest or sunk, and some thought the* Audacious *must have taken one of them, and took her away from the fleet as she was missing May* 30; *but the best joke was that the French Commander-in-Chief had the impudence to say to those ships who joined him that he had thrashed us on the* 29*th completely, and that he only wanted to have another little dust with us before he should carry us all into Brest. Our fleet was formed, and we only waited to get near enough to the enemy to begin.*

"At eight the action began, and the firing from the enemy was very smart before we could engage the ship that came to our turn to engage, as every ship is to have one because our line is formed ahead, and theirs is formed also. Suppose their first or leading ship is a 100 *guns and ours a* 74, *our ship must engage her. I believe we were the ninth or tenth ship; our lot fell to an* 80*-gun ship, so we would not waste our powder and shot by firing at other ships, though I am sorry to say they fired very smartly at us and unluckily killed two men before we fired a gun, which so exasperated our men that they kept singing out, 'For God's sake, brave captain, let us fire! Consider, sir, two poor souls are slaughtered already.' But Captain Duckworth would not let them fire till we came abreast of the ship we were to engage, when Captain Duckworth cried out, 'Fire, my boys, fire!' upon which our enraged boys gave them such an extraordinary warm reception that I really believe it struck the rascals with the panic. The French ever since the* 29*th (because we so much damaged one of their ships) called us the little devil and the little black ribband, as we have a black streak painted on our side. They made the signal for three or four of their ships to come down and sink us, and if we struck to them to give us no quarter; but all this did not in the least dishearten our ship's company, and we kept up a very smart fire when some of the enemy's masts and yards*

went over their side, which we gave credit for some of our doing.

"*The smoke was so thick that we could not at all times see the ships engaging ahead and astern. Our main-topmast and main-yard being carried away by the enemy's shot, the Frenchmen gave three cheers, upon which our ship's company, to show they did not mind it, returned them the three cheers, and after that gave them a furious broadside. About this time a musket ball came and struck Captain Duckworth between the bottom part of his thumb and finger, but very slightly, so that he only wrapped a handkerchief about it, and it is now almost quite well. But to proceed with my account: at about ten the* Queen *broke their line again, and we gave three cheers at our quarters; and now we engaged whichever ship we could best. A ship of* 80 *guns, which we had poured three or four broadsides into on May* 29, *we saw drawing ahead on our lee quarter to fire into us, which ship our ship's company had a great desire to have made strike to us on the* 29*th, and now quite rejoiced at having an opportunity of engaging her again, gave three cheers at their quarters, and began a very smart firing at their former antagonist.*

"*Their firing was not very smart, though she contrived to send a red-hot shot into the captain's cabin where I am quartered, which kept rolling about and burning everybody, when gallant Mears, our first lieutenant, took it up in his speaking-trumpet and*

threw it overboard. At last being so very close to her we supposed her men had left their quarters, as Frenchmen do not like close quarters. She bore down to leeward of the fleet, being very much disabled. The French fleet then ran away like cowardly rascals and we made all the sail we could.

"*Lord Howe ordered our ships that were not very much disabled to take the prizes in tow, and our own dismasted ships, who were erecting jury masts as fast as possible. But I forgot to tell you that the ship which struck to us was so much disabled that she could not live much longer upon the water, but gave a dreadful reel and lay down on her broadside. We were afraid to send any boats to help them, because they would have sunk her by too many poor souls getting into her at once. You could plainly perceive the poor wretches climbing over to windward and crying most dreadfully. She then righted a little, and then her head went down gradually, and she sunk. She after that rose again a little and then sunk, so that no more was seen of her. Oh, my dear father! when you consider of five or six hundred souls destroyed in that shocking manner, it will make your very heart relent. Our own men even were a great many of them in tears and groaning, they said God bless them. Oh, that we had come into a thousand engagements sooner than so many poor souls should be at once destroyed in that shocking manner. I really think it would have rent the hardest of hearts.*"

Jervis sums up the story to Parker's father somewhat grimly. "Your young tar has had a bellyful of fighting under Lord Howe. That battle was the best fought on our side of any since the Dutch war."

In May 1796 Parker was transferred to the *Leviathan*, a 74, and saw some service, with patches of hard fighting, in the West Indies. In October of the same year, still a youth not fifteen years old, he was made acting lieutenant of the *Magicienne*, a fast and handy frigate, with an enterprising captain—Ricketts—just entering on a cruise in the West Indian waters which was to last eighteen months. Parker now had found exactly the field that suited him. Here were adventures, prizes, pursuits, reckless boat attacks, and excursions; a life in which every day brought some new incident. The West Indian trade was rich; the seas swarmed with privateers; the French islands offered endless points of attack. And the next eighteen months of Parker's life may well be the envy still of all British boys.

A youth of fifteen acting lieutenant in a fine frigate in active service seems, indeed, to modern ideas absurd; but Parker had strong influence behind him. Let it be remembered that Rodney promoted his son from the rank of a midshipman to that of a post-captain in a single month, and

when the boy was not yet sixteen. And Parker's own biography tells the story of Sir Charles Adams, who, when not yet quite twenty years of age, had reached the rank of post-captain, when it was suddenly discovered that, by some verbal error, his earlier promotions were invalid, and the youthful captain shrank at a breath into a midshipman once more. He had to go through the formality of re-examination, and mounted the ladder of promotion again with such agility, that he passed, was promoted, sailed, and was made captain for the second time before his twentieth year arrived. In a period when such things happened it need cause no surprise that the nephew of Lord St. Vincent was acting lieutenant when not quite fifteen.

The captain of the *Magicienne* had at first some natural doubts as to Parker's capacity for his new post, and the gunner, a storm-beaten veteran, was put in his watch to dry-nurse him. But he quickly reported to the captain that "Mr. Parker made no mistakes," and the young acting lieutenant was left to keep his watch unassisted.

The cruise of the *Magicienne* lasted eighteen months, and it is difficult to imagine that any ship ever spent a busier and more profitable year and a half. Almost every second day reports a capture or a chase, or a cutting out expedition,

or a dash at an enemy's fort, sometimes alone, sometimes in company with another stray British frigate. Some of the exploits attempted were of a very daring sort, and they did not always succeed. Thus on February 14 a cluster of French merchant vessels, with four privateers and some shore batteries to defend them, were found lying in Porto Rico. Parker led the attacking party, consisting of ninety seamen—all volunteers—in the launch, the cutter and a small prize sloop. The sloop grounded, the boats were beaten off, and the expedition came back with many wounded. Parker, who was not yet sixteen, showed both skill and courage in the attack; but a youth just turned fifteen leading nearly a hundred British seamen in a dash at an enemy's fort is surely a curious spectacle. On the next day the *Magicienne* avenged the defeat by capturing a French privateer, and cutting a Spanish merchantman out of Calabash Bay. Six weeks afterwards, the *Regulus*, another frigate, having joined, the *Magicienne* entered the harbour of Cape Roxo by night, spiked the guns at the head of the harbour, cut out a Spanish schooner and sloop, and burnt eleven merchantmen. They rooted out a venomous nest of pirates in Platform Bay; attempted, but failed, to seize by night-surprise the town of Aguada, &c., &c. A cruise like this yielded many fat pickings. In 1798

Parker, not yet seventeen years old, solemnly appoints his own prize-agent in London, and gives him plenty of business to do. Sometimes the frigates and other light craft on the station agreed to pool their prizes, and their joy when Spain declared war, as reflected in Parker's letters, is almost touching. "We must look out," he writes, "for some fat Spaniards returning home. All my shipmates are in high glee."

On May 1, 1799, Parker, scarcely eighteen years old yet, hoisted his flag as acting captain on the *Volage*, a 24-gun frigate. He made a pooling agreement, as to prizes, with a cluster of other cruisers, and in eight weeks the ring had captured eleven schooners, seven brigs, and six ships. This must be regarded as the "Tom Cringle" stage of Parker's career, for the adventures and tricks, the captures and escapes, which marked it. A youth of eighteen commanding a fast frigate in such waters, and at such a period, must have had an intoxicating time. The *Volage* cruised off Havanna for nearly the whole of June with hammock cloths and tarpaulins hiding her gun ports, her sails trimmed with elaborate slovenliness, her braces slackened, so that the last thing in the world she resembled was a smart frigate; and under this disguise many prizes were taken. One memorable day no less than twelve merchant sail, convoyed

by a brig and six armed schooners, came out of the harbour. They found the appearance of the loitering and slovenly-looking *Volage* suspicious, however, and putting hurriedly about, went fluttering back to the harbour, closely pursued by the hungry *Volage*.

In November Parker was appointed to the command of the *Stork*, of 18 guns, and enjoyed another stretch of delightful and highly profitable cruising. "My last cruise in the *Stork*," he writes to his sisters, "will clear me, I believe, £500. On the whole I do not complain." Most youths will think he had remarkably little reason to "complain"! He goes on to say, "You are all very anxious to know how tall I am, &c. My height is five feet five inches, and I am thin, well tanned by the sun, and want a great deal of English polishing; so when I return to England I must put myself entirely under your directions to learn good-breeding, which sailors, you know, are not remarkable for."

A young gentleman of eighteen, in command of a frigate on a very profitable cruising ground, ought to have been considered sufficiently fortunate; but desperate attempts were being made to push young Parker still further up the ladder. In June 1800 St. Vincent wrote to the First Lord of the Admiralty on his behalf, and received

a favourable reply. His actual promotion was delayed a few days in order to give him "a chance of picking up something" in the *Stork*; but on October 9 he is posted to *L'Oiseau*; and passing over some intermediate changes, on November 20, 1802, he was appointed to the *Amazon*, a very fine frigate, on the deck of which the gallant and good Riou had been slain in the fight before Copenhagen. The war was just then about to be renewed, and Parker writes to his mother the words we have placed at the head of this sketch—"No one I think so fortunate as myself; the finest frigate in the navy at the beginning of a war." He has a boyish delight in his new command. He calls his ship his "wife," discovers ever new merits in her, and scorns all other ships by comparison with her.

Yet behind his boyish and simple-minded joy there were some fine qualities. Parker, young as he was, brought to his new command a high degree of professional skill, perfect fearlessness, and conceptions of duty not unworthy of the nephew of St. Vincent. Premature command would ruin most lads; it ripened Parker. The "orders and regulations" he drew up for his frigate would have done credit to Hardy or to Saumarez. He had that rare faculty, the art of governing men; of being strict without being

severe. He grasped the essentials of discipline. "No duty," he wrote, "however trifling, should be executed with indifference. Exactness is the grand system. The men should never be worked or exposed without their officers attending with them. . . . It behoves the officers to let them share the comforts of this life as well as the hardships. Punish seldom, and only when necessary; but when you do, punish severely." Parker was indeed one of the most "fortunate" of officers. But if he owed his quick promotion to influence, he owed his fitness for promotion to himself, and to the diligent training of the fine gifts nature had bestowed on him.

Parker commanded the *Amazon* from November 1802 to February 1812, and it was probably the happiest part of his professional career. He came under the flag of Nelson. He took part in great events; he felt himself on a greater stage than when in the West Indies; and he won the confidence and praise of his superiors. Nelson himself found this little, brown-skinned, modest-looking and very youthful captain a sailor after his own heart, and he describes Parker as "always giving me pleasure." Warren declares Parker is "a real treasure in a squadron." An alert and well-disciplined frigate like the *Amazon*, under a captain who, if he had the eagerness of youth

had also the cool judgment that belongs to later years, was invaluable to Nelson during the blockade of Toulon, and, later, in the great pursuit of Villeneuve to the West Indies.

Parker's pride in his new command is visible in every line of his letters, and sometimes, no doubt, found droll expression. He had an overwhelming sense of the respect due to the flag he carried; and when he was taking the Duke of Kent from Lisbon to England his log records, "Fired three musquets and two guns to an American ship to make her pay proper respect to the royal standard."

The *Amazon* was worked hard, but Parker was tireless; and he found time, while carrying despatches for Nelson and acting as his outlook, to do some pretty fighting on his own account, and to gather in a decent harvest of fat prizes. Nelson himself delighted to discover daring errands for his favourite frigate and its boy captain. Thus he writes to St. Vincent, off Toulon, March 17, 1804: "I have sent your nephew this morning to see if he can lay salt on the tail of a French frigate. I every day see new and excellent traits in him. Hardy is his great pattern about his ship, and a better he could not have." Nelson, indeed, found for Parker at last a very curious mission, and one which sheds an odd light on the naval life of that period.

Towards the end of 1804 the Admiralty appointed Sir John Orde to the command of the Gibraltar station. Nelson at that moment was off Toulon, and in command of the Mediterranean; there was thus a conflict of jurisdiction between Orde and himself; and Orde was his senior, a man of resentful temper, and with an ancient grievance against Nelson. He had never forgiven him for having the command of the squadron despatched in pursuit of Brueys, a pursuit which ended at the Nile. Orde considered that he had a better right to the command, and he quarrelled so furiously on the subject with St. Vincent that he was peremptorily suspended by that stern veteran and sent to England. At Gibraltar, Orde found himself in excellent position to annoy Nelson. He practically intercepted his communications with England. No ship from his fleet was allowed to pass the straits; it was detained under one pretext or another, sent to take charge of Orde's convoys, or to cruise in some particular direction for him. The situation grew intolerable; and Nelson at last took a characteristic method of defeating Orde's tactics.

The *Amazon* was a fast boat, and Parker was a cool and adroit sailor. Nelson sent for him, and explained the situation. "Sir John Orde," he said, "remains at the entrance of the Straits and takes my frigates from me. . . . I cannot even get my

despatches home." Parker was to evade Orde's ships, as though they were Frenchmen or Spaniards, and steal through the Straits under cover of night, carrying despatches for Lisbon. "I have not signed your orders," Nelson said, "because Orde is my senior officer; but if it should come to a court-martial, Hardy can swear to my handwriting, and you shall not be broke. Remember, Parker," Nelson added, "if you cannot weather that fellow, I shall think you have not a drop of your old uncle's blood in your veins."

Parker's orders, in Nelson's own handwriting, directed him to "pass Cape Spartel in the night, . . . bring to for nothing if you can help it, hoist the signal for quarantine, and that you are charged with despatches. If you are forced to speak by a superior officer, show him only my order for not interfering with you, and unless he is an admiral superior to me, you will obey my orders instead of any pretended ones from him." Here was an adventure to delight a youthful frigate-captain! He was taken into Nelson's confidence. He adopted eagerly, as did the whole fleet, Nelson's side in the quarrel against Orde; and he was chosen by Nelson himself to evade and defeat Orde. There was not a frigate-captain in the service who would not have given five years of his life to have been in Parker's place! And if Parker succeeded in "weathering that fellow," and

got Nelson's despatches safely through the Straits, he was to have as a reward a fortnight's cruise for his own hand in the prize-haunted waters west of Gibraltar.

Parker did "weather that fellow" with characteristic skill and neatness. The *Amazon* parted company with the fleet on January 1, 1805, crept up to Gibraltar; and, choosing a favourable night and wind, ran through the Straits. Orde's big ships were clearly visible standing off the shore under easy sail with three reefs in their topsails; and they were solemnly recorded in the *Amazon's* log as being "apparently under Russian colours." But Orde's outlying cordon of frigates under a smart commodore, Sir William Hoste, was not to be evaded. The *Amazon* was brought to, Hoste himself came on board, and after a brief chat was about to give Parker Orde's standing instructions not to go west, but to join his flag. Parker took Hoste into his cabin, told him frankly he was avoiding Orde's squadron by Nelson's instructions, and showed him his written orders. He reminded Hoste that he owed his own advancement to St. Vincent and to Nelson; "the question of a court-martial," Parker added, "would be very mischievous. Don't you think it would be better if you were not to meet the *Amazon* to-night?"

Hoste, after a little reflection, agreed—no doubt

with a twinkle in his eye—that it would be as well to regard his interview with the *Amazon* as never having happened, and without further speech he went over the ship's side into his boat.

Parker ran before the wind. When day broke, three or four large ships were visible against the eastern sky; they signalled vigorously, but the flags looked black against the intense light of the rising sun. Parker might be forgiven for mistaking these striped flags for Spanish or Russian colours; and the active *Amazon*, with every inch of canvas spread, flew westward, making no signal in return. Parker had "weathered that fellow."

On the 26th he was off Lisbon. The English packet was just coming out. Nelson's despatches were sent on board, a receipt for them taken, and Parker's task was accomplished. Now came his reward. His officers and crew wished to run into Lisbon. They had not been in port for nearly a year, and a few weeks ashore was the most delightful of prospects. But the commercial side of Parker's character was in the ascendant. He had the liberty of cruising for prizes for a few days, and he was not going to throw such a golden chance away. He had what may be called a West Indian appetite for fat Spaniards. "This," he told his officers, "is the first opportunity of making prizes, and I will not neglect it for pleasure."

All the next day the sea was empty; no topsail broke the sky-line, and there were sulky brows on the *Amazon's* quarterdeck, and many marine expletives in the forecastle. But Parker's virtue had its reward. The next day a fine ship, Spanish in every detail of her rig, was in sight, and the *Amazon* bore down on her with the eager appetite of a cruising shark. She was promptly boarded, and, after a few moments, the officer came pulling hurriedly back, hardly able to speak from excitement.

"She is the *Gravina*, sir, of six guns," he stammered to Parker.

"Well, what is her cargo?"

"Oh, sir, she has hides and indigo."

"That is capital;" but seeing excitement still in every line of his lieutenant's face—"anything else?"

"Yes, sir, cochineal."

"Still better; what's the matter? Any more?"

"Sir, she has 330,000 dollars in hard coin beside!"

Here was luck indeed; exactly the luck which Jack most desires. The dollars were transferred to the *Amazon*, the prize sent in to Gibraltar, and was found to contain other unsuspected wealth. From that one capture Parker himself drew nearly £20,000; Nelson's share as admiral came to nearly £10,000.

"I think," he tells his father afterwards, "that trip to the west will altogether yield me nearly £24,000." His boatswain and carpenter received £1500 each, and both had just been promoted from before the mast.

When the *Amazon* rejoined the fleet, Parker reported himself, and began to tell Nelson of his captures, but was sharply interrupted by the question, "Where are my despatches?" Parker produced the receipt for them from the despatch boat, and was then allowed to tell the tale of his prizes. He concluded by handing Nelson a draft for nearly £10,000, and saying, "This is your lordship's share."

Lord Nelson, according to the story as told in Parker's life, looked at the draft for a moment, and said, rather sadly: "I am sorry for it. I wished you to have made £10,000; you have made double. You will marry and stay on shore. I shall be very sorry if you give up serving." Parker's first use of this windfall, however, was to send a present of a carriage and a pair of horses to his mother, and to charge his estate with £300 a year for his parents.

Parker has left an elaborate schedule of "vessels captured or detained, from which I am entitled to share prize-money, as captain of His Majesty's ship *Amazon*, between the 20th of November 1802 and the 14th November 1811." It includes sixty vessels

of all rigs and sizes; and the cash received from them comes to between £35,000 and £40,000, in sums ranging from "£7, 6s. 7d." to "£18,653, 9s. 1d." To this is to be added the sums taken in the *Stork*, on which vessel, in a cruise of fifteen weeks, he took prizes which yielded him some £3000. When he paid off the *Amazon*, indeed, in 1812, Parker had enjoyed some twenty years of crowded and exciting service, he had made a fortune in the process, and he was just thirty years of age! Certainly he was the most fortunate of sailors.

Parker missed Trafalgar through being detached on outlook service. In 1806, when under the flag of Sir John Warren, he captured the *Belle Poule*, a fine French frigate, after a smart fight; and he did good work on the coasts of Spain during the Peninsular War. After the *Amazon*—by this time a worn-out ship—was paid off, Parker gave up the sea for a time, and settled down for fifteen years as a country gentleman. In 1827 he was offered the command of the squadron on the Cape of Good Hope station; but, with characteristic modesty, refused it, quoting St. Vincent's maxim that no one ought to fly his flag as admiral who had not commanded a line-of-battle ship; and Parker, as yet, had commanded nothing better than a 38-gun frigate. He would accept, he said, the command of a 74, and was accordingly appointed to the *War-*

spite, and served under Codrington on the coast of Greece, and afterwards in the Channel. He afterwards flew his flag on the coast of Portugal in command of a squadron, and was in naval command during the Chinese War of 1842.

His later services, however, do not concern us. He is a type of the younger officers who grew up under Nelson's influence, and brought what may be called the Nelson tradition down to modern times; its traditions of discipline, of energy, of hard fighting, of sleepless vigilance; its devotion to the flag, its heroic ideal of duty. A breath of the great days of Nelson is in his story.

CHAPTER XI

SIR EDWARD PELLEW (LORD EXMOUTH) (1757–1833).

"*Pellew, I know you won't give up the ship.*"—(His captain, when mortally wounded, to Pellew.)

A STRANDED ship might well be regarded as a very ill-omened crest for a sailor; but when Edward Pellew became a baronet, and had to decide on a coat-of-arms, he chose this as his symbol. And that stranded ship which forms the crest of the Exmouth family to this day is a record of as noble a deed as the sea ever witnessed. Pellew, then in the midst of his brilliant career, was dining one evening at Plymouth, and a furious gale was shrieking above the roofs of the town. News came to the dinner-table that an Indiaman, crowded with troops and passengers, was on her beam ends in the surf thundering on the pebbly beach, and must soon break up. Pellew was suffering from a half-healed wound, but he hurried to the scene. A single hawser had been brought ashore, and a few of the Indiaman's officers had reached safety by its

means. But all order was lost on the crowded decks of the unfortunate ship. No one dared to follow along the hawser, over which the great seas were breaking. In the confusion and darkness it seemed probable that all on board the stranded ship must perish. Pellew offered large sums to the hardy Plymouth boatmen to put off to the imperilled ship, but the danger was too great for even them to face. "Then I must go myself," said Pellew.

He fought his way along the hawser to the ship and took command of its crowded deck. His cool courage and dominating personality quickly brought order to the distracted crowd. The mere whisper of his name, as it ran through the shivering passengers and crew, gave them courage. Pellew stood, with drawn sword, at the hawser, to prevent any rush; and, one by one, the whole of its passengers were passed safely ashore—the women and the children first, then the sick, the soldiers, and last of all the crew. Pellew was not actually the last ashore, for he was almost crippled by his wound; but only three remained to be saved when he put himself in the travelling loop and was dragged along the hawser to shore. That stranded ship, which still remains the Exmouth crest, is thus the memorial of how one man, by his individual skill and courage, saved six hundred lives!

SIR EDWARD PELLEW (LORD EXMOUTH)

From a picture in the National Portrait Gallery by J. NORTHCOTE, R.A.

Edward Pellew was never under Nelson's personal command, and so cannot be described as one of Nelson's captains. But he certainly belongs to Nelson's school, and embodied in himself all the splendid characteristics of that school. Nelson was his professional ideal; to serve under him was his ambition. He applied to serve under Nelson in 1804; but Nelson knew his gifts for separate command, and refused. "You have always, my dear Sir Edward," he wrote, "proved yourself so equal to command a fleet that it would be a sin to place you in any other situation; and my services are nearly at an end. For, in addition to other infirmities, I am nearly blind. However, I hope to fight one more battle." That letter was written on May 1, 1804, when Nelson was off Brest, watching La Touche Treville. The "one more battle" Nelson had yet to fight was Trafalgar. Pellew took no part in that or any of Nelson's great sea-fights; yet he may be justly regarded as one of the typical seamen of Nelson's school and times.

His career is of singular range and interest. He was a middy before he was fourteen years old, and was familiar with shipwreck and battle at an age when most lads are spelling their unwilling way through the Latin Grammar. He took part in the stubborn fighting on the Canadian

lakes; was in command, as master's mate, of a little contingent of sailors in Burgoyne's unfortunate expedition in 1777. He was present, a mere lad, in the council of war, when Burgoyne resolved to surrender, and begged that his men might be left out of the capitulation. "He had never heard," he said, "of sailors capitulating, and was confident he could bring them off"! Young Pellew was of extraordinary activity and daring, a sailor to the tips of his fingers, and with almost more than a sailor's generosity. He saved lives enough at sea by personal courage to have covered himself from head to foot with the Humane Society's medals, if that decoration had been in existence a century ago.

In all physical gifts—in quickness of eye and foot, in strength, stature, and agility, he had few equals in the whole service; and there was a ferment of daring in his very blood which made him attempt feats from which nine men out of every ten would shrink in mere horror. His early years are one long catalogue of adventures. When a middy he leaped into the sea from the yard-arm of his ship—then going fast before the wind—to save a drowning man. His hat blew off into the sea when sailing alone in a boat. He lashed the helm down, hove-to the boat, and jumped into the sea to recover the hat; but the boat fell off

and gathered way when he tried to recover it, and only after an hour's chase of his boat did he succeed in clambering on board it. When fighting on the American lakes Pellew assisted at the launch of a newly-built sloop. He was perched on the top of the sheers, swaying the main-mast into its place, when mast, sheers, and Pellew toppled over into the waters of the lake and disappeared. "Poor Pellew," cried his captain, "he has gone at last!" But Pellew was not born to be drowned, and he presently emerged, bedraggled, but unharmed.

His commanding stature and giant strength served him well at one of the critical moments of his life, when lying in Bantry Bay, in 1799. A general mutiny was planned in the squadron; the signal was to be given from Pellew's ship. When the mutinous crew, in a tumultuous crowd, appeared on the deck, Pellew caught the sound, interpreted it, ran straight in among the mutineers, followed by one or two of his officers, and seized with each hand one of the ringleaders. Pellew's dauntless look, his stature and fierceness, cowed the mutineers almost in an instant, and the outbreak was arrested. St. Vincent wrote afterwards that "the most important service Pellew ever rendered to his country was saving the British fleet in Bantry Bay"! The plan of the mutineers was to burn the ships and

join the rebels ashore; and if the plan had succeeded it might well have proved a national disaster of the gravest sort.

One of the most picturesque incidents of Pellew's career took place in 1796. The great French expedition against Ireland sailed from Brest on December 16, when Pellew, with two other frigates under his flag, was keeping watch over the port. He sent off his sister ships to carry the news that the French were out, but remained with his own ship, the *Indefatigable*, to make that process for the Frenchmen themselves as uncomfortable as possible; and he proved that night, how effectively a single frigate, properly handled, can bewilder and harry a whole fleet. The French admiral originally intended to go by the south channel out of Brest; night coming on, and the wind shifting, he changed his mind, and led the way himself into the west channel; but many of his ships were already in the south channel, and the distracted admiral filled the night sky with agitated signals, trying to keep his huge flock of ships together. The haze and darkness made the signals doubtful; and Pellew assisted actively in the process. He ran boldly into the western channel himself, amongst the puzzled Frenchmen. His ship was a French capture, and still had a very French look; and Pellew counted on this circumstance to escape detection. Mean-

while, with a blaze of irrelevant rockets, and of ingenious false signals, he added to the general distraction, and utterly defeated the French admiral's efforts to keep his fleet together.

Pellew won his knighthood by one of the most famous frigate actions in British history, the opening fight in the war which broke out in 1793. He commanded the *Nymphe*, of 36 guns, manned principally with Cornish miners. Pellew was himself a Cornishman; he knew that Cornish miners, for pluck, dash, and discipline, came next to sailors; and as he could not secure a full crew of seamen, he shipped eighty Cornish miners. With a raw crew, most of whom had never fired a shot before, Pellew, when he was two days out from Falmouth, fell in with the crack frigate of the French navy—the *Cleopatra*. Pellew knew his crew could fight, if they could not manœuvre; he made a special appeal to his eighty Cornish miners to fight for the honour of their county, ran boldly down to the *Cleopatra*, for three-quarters of an hour engaged her gun to gun, and then boarded and carried her in the most gallant style. "We dished her up," was his record, "in fifty minutes—the crack ship of France!" The manner in which Pellew's eighty Cornish miners tumbled over the bulwarks of the *Cleopatra*, and charged along her decks, was, in brief, irresistible.

Pellew, again, took part in one of the most exciting and wonderful actions ever fought, when two frigates—the *Indefatigable*, under his own command, and the *Amazon*—destroyed the *Droits de l'Homme*, a great two-decker, the flagship of the squadron which carried General Humber's expedition to Ireland. The two frigates sighted the great Frenchman in the midst of a gale off Ushant. The gale hardened to a tempest, but the British frigates crossed and recrossed the bows of the Frenchman, over which the sea broke in cataracts, and tormented her with their fire. The Frenchman carried a thousand troops, and tried again and again to board one or other of her tormentors; but, with perfect seamanship, they evaded this. For eleven hours, in a furious tempest, the British frigates hung on the stern or bow of the Frenchman, till they ran her hopelessly ashore in the Bay of Audierne. The *Indefatigable*, under Pellew's fine seamanship, clawed off the very breakers and escaped; the *Amazon* went ashore, but, by perfect discipline and seamanship, every man was saved. The unfortunate *Droits de l'Homme* lay for three days in the surf, and no less than 900 of her crew perished. The French protested that "the ships had fought like three dogs till they all fell over the cliff together!" It is more accurate to say that the two British frigates with coolest skill and daring fought the

74 through eleven hours of tempest, and drove her ashore; and a finer example of obstinate courage and perfect seamanship is scarcely to be found in history.

Pellew's best title to fame, however, lies in the fact that he brought Nelson's methods down to the period after the great war had closed; and when peace had actually arrived, he performed, in the noblest of all causes, a feat of war which Nelson himself might have envied.

Algiers a hundred years ago was a city of Mohammedan pirates, an oppression and a scandal to Christendom. Its ships preyed on the commerce of all nations. In its streets and on its walls and piers thousands of Christian slaves suffered tortures worthy of the lowest circles in Dante's "Inferno." Many attempts had been made to break the strength of this piratical city. The Emperor Charles V. tried to do it, and failed badly in the attempt, as did the Spaniards and the French in turn, and with repeated expeditions. The United States Government in 1814 despatched a squadron against the Algerines. They captured a frigate, and secured the relief of ten American citizens by the surrender of 500 Algerine prisoners — a not very magnificent success. In May 1816, the Algerines destroyed at Bona some three hundred Italian boats engaged in the coral fishery, and

slew, or carried off into captivity, all their crews. Great Britain was mistress of the sea, and the police of all seas were in her hands. The queenship of the sea would be a sham if it were wasted in sloth; a hateful tyranny if it were used for selfish ends. One of the first uses made of the command of the sea by Great Britain was to put down the slave trade; and when the great Napoleonic wars were over the task of destroying this nest of sea pirates that vexed the Mediterranean, and of releasing the thousands of Christians held in slavery there, fell naturally to England.

Pellew, by this time raised to the peerage as Lord Exmouth, was put in command of the expedition against Algiers, and was given an absolutely free hand as to the force to be employed. To the amazement of everybody, he declared five sail-of-the-line sufficient! Nelson himself had declared twenty-five line-of-battle ships would be required for a successful attack on Algiers. The city was of enormous strength—in the opinion of many experts unassailable from the sea. But Lord Exmouth had studied the plan of Algiers; he knew of what British sailors were capable, and he believed no fortification could resist the fire of a British three-decker at close quarters. The force with which he actually sailed consisted of his flagship, the *Queen Charlotte,* of 100 guns; the *Impregnable,*

98 guns; three 74's, one two-decker of 50 guns, four frigates, and some gunboats. A small squadron of Dutch frigates with some difficulty obtained permission to share in the attack, as Dutch commerce had suffered greatly from Algerine rovers.

Nothing is more striking than the speed and energy with which Exmouth carried out his task. He left Plymouth on July 28, and learned at Gibraltar that the Dey of Algiers had assembled an army of 40,000 men to resist him. He reached Algiers on August 27, and sent in a boat requiring the surrender of all Christian slaves, the repayment of sums exacted as piratical tribute, and a treaty abolishing Christian slavery for ever. An answer was demanded in two hours. At the end of two hours the boat was seen returning, with the signal "No answer" flying from its masthead. Instantly Exmouth signalled to his fleet the question, "Are you ready?" and bore up for the city. The soft air slowly fanned the great ships along. Each captain knew the exact position he was to take up, and so cleverly had Exmouth chosen their positions that nearly one-half of the innumerable batteries which guarded Algiers could not bear on the British ships.

Exmouth himself, in the *Queen Charlotte*, led the stately battle-line; and the crowds on the Mole at Algiers saw with amazement the huge hull and lofty

masts of the British flagship come sliding on, with its tiers of batteries, to within a hundred yards of the pier, then bear majestically up, while the chain cable roared hoarsely from its stern, and its acres of white canvas folded up like the wings of a bird. So instantly had Exmouth led into position that he caught the Algerine batteries with guns unloaded. So cool was he that he actually ran out a hawser to the mainmast of an Algerine brig which lay at the entrance of the harbour. The batteries on the Mole itself mounted 220 guns, two of them monsters twenty feet long, the heaviest ordnance known at that time. The batteries that girdled the city, or hung menacingly on the steep slope of the hill up which the city climbs, mounted in all fully 1000 guns. In the artificial harbour formed by the Mole were some dozen frigates and corvettes and thirty-six gunboats. Yet, with the coolest daring, Exmouth led his little squadron down, almost within touch of these countless batteries, and anchored as quietly as though he were off the Hoe at Plymouth!

The Mole was crowded with troops, on whom the lofty three decks of the *Queen Charlotte* almost cast their shadow, and Exmouth actually signalled to them from his quarterdeck with his hat to move out of the way. Just then one of the Algerine batteries on the hill broke into angry

flame; another battery on the sea front flashed; in another moment the 220 guns on the Mole would have bellowed out their thunder. But at the first flash Exmouth gave the order to "stand by," and the word ran from officer to officer along the triple decks of the *Queen Charlotte*. At the second flash the cry of "Fire!" followed; and before the third Algerine gun spoke, with a sudden roar and triple lines of leaping flames, the *Queen Charlotte* poured its tempest of fire over the Mole. It is said that single broadside slew 500 men! Thrice, in as many minutes, the British guns thundered, and then the whole scene was lost in the smoke. But in that brief time nearly half the Algerine guns in the Mole were dismounted; of the two gigantic guns immediately opposite the British flagship, one, with its carriage, had disappeared in the sea; the other, struck on the muzzle by a 24-pounder, was turning its useless and broken nose up to the sky.

The other British ships—the *Leander*, the *Severn*, the *Glasgow*, the *Superb*—had meanwhile slowly drifted into their assigned stations, and almost with a single movement had furled their sails, dropped anchor, and broken into the flame of quick-following broadsides. The *Superb* was intended to anchor so close to the *Queen Charlotte* as to thrust its jib-boom over the flagship's poop.

But the air was light, and, as a matter of fact, a vacant space of some hundred feet stretched between the stern of the *Queen Charlotte* and the jib-boom of the *Superb*. Into this space Captain Wise, in command of the *Granicus*, a 36-gun frigate, with audacious courage and seamanship, succeeded in manœuvring his ship. Here was a 36-gun frigate, that is, taking up its position with a ship of 100 guns ahead, and one of 74 guns astern, and firing with its light guns as fiercely as either, and probably with more satisfaction to its officers and crew!

The *Impregnable*, under Rear-Admiral Milne, failed to reach her proper station, as the smoke of the guns covered the whole landscape, and she unfortunately lay immediately opposite the Lighthouse battery with its three tiers of guns, and within 400 yards of it, while other batteries commanded her quarters. The tall masts of the *Impregnable*, rising above the drifting continents of smoke, marked her position, and she suffered terribly, 150 men being killed or wounded within half-an-hour. The Dutch frigates, meanwhile, had taken their assigned position, and the roar of the battle steadily deepened, the deepest note being the awful sound of the *Queen Charlotte's* broadsides. Her fire had the most deadly accuracy. The Algerine batteries crumbled under it. Gun after

gun was silenced. Many were overwhelmed beneath the tumbled parapets. An Algerine officer in command of the lighthouse batteries, when his last gun was silenced, leaped in impotent fury on a fragment of the parapet that remained, and shook his scimitar wildly at the great British ship!

Exmouth's interpreter, himself a Turk, has left an amusing account of the battle and of his own terrors while the British flagship reeled to the thunder of her own broadsides, or crashed to the stroke of the Algerine shot; while along the smoke-filled decks the seamen toiled with grim but cheerful energy at their guns. "I," says the unfortunate interpreter, "was like an astonished or stupid man, and did not know myself." "But," he adds, "I observed with great astonishment that during all the time of the battle not one seaman appeared tired, not one lamented the dreadful continuation of the fight, but, on the contrary, the longer it lasted the more cheerfulness and pleasure were amongst them!"

At four o'clock the British fire ceased for a few moments, while the flagship's barge shot out, boarded the Algerine frigate moored across the Mole, and set fire to it. By this time flames were breaking out in the Algerine squadron within the Mole; they ran from ship to ship, and presently four large frigates, five corvettes, and

some forty gunboats were in flames. The fire caught the storehouses and arsenal on the piers, and by ten o'clock the harbour and the Mole were one mass of flames. The night sky was reddened. The tall masts of the ships, the flat roofs of the city, grew as clear as at noontide in the dreadful light. "It was a glorious sight," wrote Exmouth to his brother afterwards, "to see the flag of the *Charlotte* towering on high when she appeared to be in the flames of the Mole itself; and never was a ship nearer burnt; it almost scorched me off the poop; we were obliged to haul in the ensign, or it would have caught fire."

So as the sun was setting, the pyramid of white houses clinging to the steep hillside that forms the city of Algiers presented an amazing sight. The Mole was a shot-torn wreck, strewn with the slain and crimson with blood. The batteries along the edge of the shore, or on the flanks of the hill, were, in the main, tumbled ruins, with the muzzles of dismounted guns sticking up at all angles. Over sea and Mole and city, rose, as though a continent were on flame beneath, clouds of eddying smoke; but through the smoke, and within a few hundred yards of the Mole, rose the tall masts of five English line-of-battle ships, from which flew, as though in haughty challenge, the flag of England. And yet behind the thunder of cannon, the flames of the burning

city and the drifting smoke, was a noble and humane purpose. Lord Exmouth and his British three-deckers were doing in 1816 what Cromwell would certainly have done two centuries earlier. He was scorching into decency, with the flame of his cannon, the bestial cruelty of a Mohammedan ruler!

At ten o'clock the Algerine batteries were silent, and Exmouth, by signal, drew off his fleet. But as the fires of the human battle below died out, the fires of what seemed some superhuman conflict awoke in the blackness of the midnight skies above. "It was a dreadful night," wrote Exmouth to his brother, "of thunder, lightning, and rain, as heavy as ever I saw." For three hours the tempest raged, and the lightning flashed incessantly. Then at last, on wrecked town and battered ships, silence fell. In the few hours of the fight the British lost 128 killed and 690 wounded; the Algerine loss was reckoned at 7000. The sustained fury of the British fire is shown by the fact that the ships expended in the engagement 118 tons of powder, and emptied on the pirate city more than 50,000 shot, and nearly 1000 10-in. shells, to say nothing of the rockets and shells from the gunboats. The interpreter, to whose story of the fight we have referred, crept from the safety of the cockpit to the deck of the *Queen Charlotte* when the fight was over. He

found Exmouth hoarse, smoke-blackened, and stained with blood, and, as he records it, "it was astonishing to see the coat of his lordship, how it was all cut up by musket balls and by grape. It was behind as if a person had taken a pair of scissors and cut it all to pieces."

At daylight Exmouth sent in a boat demanding the same terms as before the battle, and the humbled Dey yielded. He surrendered nearly 400,000 dollars, which he had received from Naples and Sicily for the redemption of slaves; he apologised humbly to the British consul, signed a treaty abolishing Christian slavery; and on the 30th the boats of the British fleet received 1083 released slaves—Italians, Greeks, or Dutch—a number afterwards brought up to 3003. Some of these slaves had been thirty-five years in servitude, and had worn chains for the whole of that period, till black furrows, like grooves cut in the bone, were worn in their limbs. Their joy—tears and prayers and laughter mingled—as they pushed off in the boats, leaving bondage and misery behind them, while the Union Jack fluttered above their heads, was strangely touching.

Never was a more righteous, a more decisive, or shorter campaign than that of Lord Exmouth against Algiers. He left Plymouth on July 28; he anchored off Algiers on August 27; on Tuesday,

September 3, he sailed away in triumph with 3000 released slaves, having broken the age-long tyranny of the Algerine power, and removed a scandal from the world. On October 6 he anchored in Portsmouth. The voyage to and fro took two months, but a week was sufficient for the guns of the *Queen Charlotte* to shatter a despotism which had tormented Europe for centuries. And the fight was as happy in its fruits as it was splendid in its daring. "It broke the chains of thousands; it gave security to millions; it delivered Christendom from a scourge and a disgrace."

CHAPTER XII

SIR THOMAS FOLEY (1757–1833)

"*It is difficult to exaggerate the coolness, intrepidity, and seamanship Foley showed at the head of the British line.*"—MAHAN.

ROUND Foley's name clusters the one great dispute of Nelson's whole professional career. Foley, in the *Goliath*, led the British attack in that fierce and hawk-like swoop on Brueys' line with which the fight at the Nile opened. And nothing recorded in naval warfare is more masterful and audacious than the fashion in which Foley took his ship through the narrow ribbon of water between the island of Aboukir, with its batteries, and the head of the French line, smashing the *Guerrier* with a raking broadside as he passed its bows, and then swung round on the inner and unprepared side of the enemy's ships. The *Zealous*, the *Orion*, and the *Theseus* followed the lead of the *Goliath*. The *Audacious* broke through the French line at the stern of the *Guerrier*; the other British ships as they came up took their places on the outer side of the French line. Thus each ship of the French

SIR THOMAS FOLEY

From an engraving after R. SMIRKE, R.A., *in the British Museum*

van lay under a crossfire from two British ships, and the head of Brueys' line was in this manner destroyed, while his rear ships—since the line lay head to wind—could only look on in agitated helplessness. The battle of the Nile, it may be said, was won by a stroke of brilliant tactics almost before a shot was fired.

But is that master-stroke of tactics to be credited to Foley or to Nelson? It is possible to quote much evidence, and many authoritative opinions, on both sides of the question. The fashion, indeed, in which the witnesses contradict each other, on the plainest matter of fact in the story, is an amusing proof of the shortness of the human memory, and the unreliable quality of men's very senses. How far distant, for example, was Nelson in the *Vanguard* when Foley led past the bows of the *Guerrier?* Elliot—afterwards Sir George Elliot—who was the *Goliath's* signal midshipman, declares "there was a gap between the *Goliath* and the *Zealous* and the rest of the fleet of about seven miles, and the battle began by only two ships against the whole of the enemy's van." Yet the logs of the various ships prove that the *Vanguard* dropped anchor beside her particular antagonist within twenty-five minutes after the first French gun was fired. Hood, in the *Zealous*, who followed close on the stern of the *Goliath*, says, "We had not

increased our distance much from the other ships coming up in the rear."

It is admitted that Nelson gave to his leading ships no order by signal to round the head of the French line; but it is contended that this particular plan had been discussed between Nelson and his captains, and Foley was only carrying out what he knew was Nelson's plan when he led so boldly across the bows of the *Guerrier*. Berry says expressly, and even with a touch of indignation in his voice, that "Nelson's projected mode of attack was minutely and precisely executed in the action." It is certain that Nelson was familiar with great historic precedents in favour of exactly Foley's manœuvre. At Palermo, in 1676, Tourville destroyed the combined Dutch and Spanish fleet by exactly that method of attack. The Battle of Sluys, three hundred years earlier, was won by Edward III. in precisely the same fashion. It cannot be doubted that Nelson had discussed with his captains this particular method of attack if the French ships were found lying at anchor.

There is one bit of direct evidence on the subject which should be final—if it were not contradicted. Williams, who was present as chaplain on board one of the British ships, says that, as the fleet was forming in line ahead the *Zealous* moved past the flagship, and "Nelson hailed Hood and asked him

if he thought there was sufficient depth of water for our ships between the enemy and the shore?" "I don't know, sir," replied Hood, "but with your permission I will stand in and try." Williams, however, was chaplain of the *Swiftsure;* and that ship was some seven miles off in the offing when the conversation took place. He could only have a second-hand knowledge of it. And his version of the story is contradicted by Hood himself. "Sir Horatio asked," says Hood, "if I thought we were far enough to the eastward to bear up round the shoal? I told him I was in eleven fathoms, but I had no chart of the place. But if he would allow me, I would bear up and try with the lead, and lead him as close as I could with safety." According to Hood himself, that is, Nelson asked, not "if there was depth of water sufficient for our ships between the enemy and the shore," but whether there was depth of water enough for the British ships to clear the shoal.

The most expressive bit of evidence is given, all unconsciously, by Hood a little later. He was following the lead of the *Goliath* straight towards the *Guerrier*, the ship at the head of the French line. "That ship," he says, "being in five fathoms of water, I expected the *Goliath* and the *Zealous* to stick on the shoal every moment, and *did not imagine we should attempt to pass within her*"! That

sentence proves that if Nelson had discussed with his captains the plan of surrounding the head of the enemy's line, the circumstance had made no impression on Hood's imagination or memory. It was the last thing he expected to see done! Had he led, the famous manœuvre would never have taken place. Foley, whose ship, it must be remembered, was the lightest 74 in the fleet—she was a ship of only 1604 tons—had more of Nelson's own insight and daring than Hood, and so did just what Nelson himself would have done had the *Vanguard*, instead of the *Goliath*, led the British fleet into the fight.

Another bit of direct, and what ought to be authoritative, evidence is supplied by Admiral Browne, who for some time served with Foley as first lieutenant of the *Elephant*. Browne says that he was in the constant habit of conversing with Foley about the great fight, and adds, "I can speak positively to the fact of his having stated that he led the British fleet inside without any previous order or arrangement." But Browne wrote this in 1845; and the recollection of a conversation which took place at a distance of nearly half a century can hardly be regarded as decisive.

Nelson's general plan for the coming battle was clear. He would attack the French fleet at sight, and wherever he found it. If he found the Frenchmen lying at anchor he would throw the whole of

his strength on a part of Brueys' line, and so crush one-half of it before the other half could come to the help of the ships attacked. Which half must be first attacked would depend on questions of wind, position, &c., which could not be known till the enemy's fleet was in sight. And exactly on this general plan the battle was actually fought. "By attacking the enemy's van and centre, the wind blowing right along their line, I was enabled to throw what force I pleased on the French ships:" this is Nelson's own statement of the plan of the battle, written afterwards for Lord Howe.

But there were two possible ways of carrying out this plan. One British ship might be anchored on the bow, and another on the quarter of each French ship in turn; or British ships could be placed on both sides of each French ship. Foley's daring lead round the head of the enemy's line decided in favour of the latter plan; but it seems highly probable that Nelson himself was in favour of the first plan, and that might well have proved even more effective than the tactics Foley actually adopted. If a British ship had been anchored on the bow and quarter of each French ship the latter could have opposed only one broadside to two. With an enemy lying on both sides of her she was able to fight both broadsides at once. The British ships, moreover, firing across so narrow an interval, inflicted much injury on each

other. Foley's plan, however, had an advantage which could hardly have been foreseen, and which in a sense, was a pure accident. The French, with great slovenliness, had not cleared their port batteries—the guns, that is, on the inner side of their line. They were choked with lumber and obstructions of every kind. A comparison of the losses on board the British ships shows that the French guns in the port batteries had less than half the effectiveness of their starboard guns, or those on the outer side of the line.

A study of all the evidence available proves, in brief, that Foley's fine and daring lead was exactly in the line of Nelson's predetermined tactics; it only settled the question of the particular way in which these tactics should be carried out. If any proof, indeed, is wanted of Nelson's great qualities as a leader, it is found in the very feature of the great fight at the Nile out of which this debate has arisen. He had discussed beforehand with his captains how to meet every possible contingency in the approaching fight; he had stamped his ideas indelibly upon them. And when the enemy's fleet was sighted there was no need to waste time in signalling. He could trust his captains to lead into the fight without a moment's pause, and in exactly the fashion which would make his plans most effective.

A curious illustration of the conflict of testimony about even material points in the story of the great battle is supplied by the varying statements as to the charts of Aboukir Bay possessed by the British fleet. Elliot says that "Hood of the *Zealous* had an English chart which was not very correct;" and if the *Zealous* had led instead of the *Goliath* this chart might have proved disastrous. Hood himself says bluntly, "I had no chart of the place." Mahan says that "the only chart in possession of the British was a rude sketch lately taken out of a prize." Sir William Laird Clowes, in his "History of the Royal Navy," says, "There was in the British fleet no trustworthy chart of the bay." But Elliot, who, it must be remembered, was the signal midshipman of the *Goliath*, says that "Captain Foley had a French atlas which proved quite correct," and which took the British ships safely round the head of the French line; and this, Elliot says, justly enough, "was a circumstance which turned out of great consequence."

A striking example of Nelson's power to forecast the details of a battle, and to provide for them, is shown by the instructions he gave to his captains at the Nile to anchor by the stern. If they had anchored in ordinary fashion by the head they must have been smitten by a raking fire from the French ships as they swung round. Anchoring from the

stern the British ships were instantly in a fighting position. Forbes, who was a middy at the Nile, says that, after the battle, "I asked the second captain of the *Aquilon* how it was that as we approached they did not fire at us. He said, 'After we got within a certain distance they held their broadside until we should anchor, and when swinging they meant to rake us.' Instead of which," says Forbes, "we anchored by the stern, and the first broadside we gave them killed their captain and destroyed every battery but the lower deck." But it was Nelson's forecasting genius, realising every detail of the coming fight, that cheated the French of their advantage.

There is no need here to tell over again the story of the famous battle, the most decisive ever fought on the sea. No one played a more gallant part in it than did Foley, or contributed more to the overwhelming victory won. He led the whole fleet into action. He fired the first and most destructive broadside from the British side. The first French flag that fluttered down in sign of defeat was the result of Foley's sustained and dreadful fire. Miller, who from the quarterdeck of the *Theseus* watched Foley lead into the fight, goes into raptures over "the very gallant and masterly manner in which the *Goliath* led along the enemy's line, gradually closing with their van."

Mahan, who writes the story of the battle from the standpoint of a critic, nearly a century later, says: "It is difficult to exaggerate the coolness, intrepidity, and seamanship Foley showed at the head of the British line." But how gallant and resolute was the temper of the whole British fleet may be judged from Elliot's narrative. He gives us the landscape of the battle as seen through the eyes of a middy, and a very keen and gallant pair of eyes they were!

Like a true middy, Elliot was quite as jealous for the honour of his own ship as for the success of the fleet. He was as eager that the *Goliath* should outsail and outdo the *Zealous*, just behind, as that Nelson should overthrow Brueys and his whole fleet lying just ahead. The keen rivalry between the two leading ships is very amusing. Elliot himself, from the *Goliath's* topmast, saw the masts of the French ships first. He did not hail the quarterdeck with the news, as the *Zealous*, he explains, was so near that his voice must have been heard on its quarterdeck. He slid down a backstay, and ran with the great tidings to Foley. The long and desperate chase, which had stretched twice across the Mediterranean, was over! The signal, "the enemy in sight," was instantly hoisted, and hoisted, indeed, with such eager haste that "the undertoggle of the upper flag at the main came off,

breaking the stop, and the lower flag came down." But the *Zealous* had caught a glimpse of that hurried, abortive cluster of flags and had guessed its meaning; and, in an instant, flew the all-important signal, thus scoring against the *Goliath*, to the speechless disgust of every youthful middy on that ship. But the *Goliath* scored the next point in the great game. It was certain that the answer from the flagship would be the signal to "form line ahead," and the ship quickest to see and obey the signal would get the lead. Elliot himself, watching the *Vanguard* with eager eyes, saw the tiny black dots of the expected signal under the flagship's foresail, as they left the deck; and before they reached the royal yard to slew over it, or the stop was broken, and the signal flags flew clear, the *Goliath* acted on the as yet unread message of those little arrested black specks. The staysails and studdingsails were all ready to be run up, the men were tailing on to the ropes; and, in a moment, before the flags of the *Vanguard's* signal flew open, the *Goliath*, from truck to deck, was clothed with every inch of canvas she could spread. The ship glided ahead of the *Zealous*, and won the perilous pride of place! "Hood," Elliot records, with the natural glee of a middy, "was annoyed, but could not help it."

The noble feature of the battle on the British

side was that every ship in the fleet was fought with unsurpassed skill and daring. There are no dark spots in the sun of that great victory. On the French side Brueys, though he was a brave man and died gallantly on the quarterdeck of his own ship, showed no leadership. He failed to guess Nelson's tactics. He was sure the British would not attack at that late hour, and he believed that, not the van, but the rear of his line was in peril, and he had placed his heaviest ships there. Villeneuve, who commanded the rear division, showed even less of enterprise and of daring than he did at Trafalgar. He looked on inertly while ship after ship in the French van and centre was destroyed; then, when the red dawn broke on the wreckage and slaughter of the battle, he slipped his anchor and bore out to sea.

Yet, on the French side in the battle there were some examples of magnificent courage. Nelson himself could not have fought his own flagship with finer courage than Dupetit Thouars showed on the quarterdeck of the *Tonnant*. He kept up his fire till every mast on his ship was shot away, and his guns were unworkable from the wreckage and slain piled about them. Then, instead of striking, he slipped his cable and drifted out of fire. But his ship was a shot-torn wreck, and he himself was a worse wreck than even the *Tonnant*. According to the

French account—almost too ghastly to be believed—he had lost first one arm, and then the other, then one of his legs, by successive round shots. Refusing to be taken below, he had his wounds roughly dressed on deck, then had his bleeding trunk placed in a tub of bran, whence he continued to give his orders till speech and life alike failed him! His last words were an order to let the ship sink at her anchor rather than surrender.

For Foley the golden hour, alike of life and of fame, was when at the Nile he led so gallantly, and with so fine a judgment, round the bows of the *Guerrier*, and dropped his anchor broadside to broadside with the *Conquerant*. He lived thirty-five years afterwards, but he did nothing to surpass that gallant deed. That is the one moment in which he becomes visible for all time to admiring posterity. But his sea service stretches through nearly sixty years, and during its earlier stages at least was crowded with gallant deeds.

Foley had Welsh blood in his veins, and came of a hardy sea stock. His uncle was an officer of the *Centurion*, under Anson, in that great seaman's famous voyage round the world. Foley himself entered the navy as a lad of thirteen. He served in the fogs and chills of the Newfoundland station for three years; he served a second term of three years amid the tropical heats and fevers of the

West Indies, and saw much perilous boat service against the privateers which swarmed in those seas. In all the hard fighting of the stormy years at the close of the eighteenth century Foley took part, and he learned seamanship and fighting skill from such great masters in the art of sea-battle as Keppel and Rodney and Hood.

In the earlier years of his sea career one gleam of the romance of sea life came to him. He was in command of a second-rater, the *St. George*, and he recaptured a notorious French privateer, *Le Général Dumouriez*. The Frenchman had a prize in tow, a Spanish register ship, laden with specie. She had on board more than 2,000,000 dollars, beside jewels and uncoined gold and silver, valued at more than a quarter of a million sterling. Here was a golden haul for the Jacks of the *St. George* and the ships with her!

At Cape St. Vincent Foley was captain of the *Britannia*, the flagship of Sir Charles Thompson, Jervis' second in command. Late in the same year he hoisted his flag on the *Goliath*, the ship with which his fame is for ever associated. He was then forty years of age, in the very prime of life, and had seen more than twenty-five years of stern and almost desperate service. He had in a high degree the art of command, and he quickly made the *Goliath*, in discipline and fighting power, almost

the most formidable ship in the most formidable fleet that ever fought and triumphed under the British flag.

Foley had the signal good fortune to be associated with Nelson again, in a sea-fight more desperate than even the Nile, the Battle of the Baltic; and he is linked with perhaps the best remembered and most picturesque incident in Nelson's whole career, when Nelson put his telescope to his blind eye, and declared "he really could not see" Sir Hyde Parker's unhappy signal to "Cease action." Foley commanded the *Elephant* in the fleet under Sir Hyde Parker, off Copenhagen, in 1801. When Nelson took his squadron of seventy-fours into the tangled navigation of the Dutch deep to attack the floating batteries of the Danes, he had to leave his own flagship, the *St. George*, a three-decker of 98 guns, and he hoisted his flag on Foley's ship, the *Elephant*. Foley had thus the supreme good fortune of being Nelson's flag-captain in that most obstinate and equally matched of sea-fights, the Battle of the Baltic.

Foley, a sailor and fighter of matchless resource and experience, was of great service to Nelson in the plans and explorations which preceded the great fight; and he took part in that famous dinner-party on board the *Elephant* the night before the day of battle. Round the table sat a group of the most

gallant spirits that ever fought for the honour of England—Nelson himself, Hardy, Fremantle, Riou, and others, in whom the sense of the coming fight ran like wine in their blood. When the party broke up, and the captains had gone back to their ships, it was with Foley and Riou that Nelson sat down to plan each stern detail of the coming battle. Nelson was of a generous, if also of a quick and hasty temper, and he never forgot the services of a tried comrade like Foley. Months after the battle he wrote: "My dear Foley, I should be most ungrateful if I could for a moment forget your public support of me in the day of battle, or your private friendship."

The one unforgettable and picturesque incident in the fight of the next day was, of course, the appearance of that unhappy signal, Number 39, "Cease action," which made its appearance from the mast-head of the *London*, Sir Hyde Parker's flagship, in the offing. Foley was walking with Nelson to and fro on the quarterdeck of the *Elephant* when the signal was reported. Nelson made no answer to the signal lieutenant who brought the report, but took another turn on the quarterdeck. "Shall I repeat the signal, sir?" asked the officer when Nelson came up again to where he stood. "No," said Nelson; then, in the high-pitched nasal tone his voice took at moments of excitement, he demanded: "Is my signal, Number 16 (for close action), flying?"

"Yes, my lord," was the answer. "Mind you keep it so," flashed Nelson. "Leave off action!" he went on; "no; d— me if I do!" Then he turned to Foley; and it is easy to picture the immortal scene: the 74 trembling to the shock of her own guns, the smoke drifting across the quarterdeck; Foley's tall figure—he was six feet two in height—looking down on Nelson's five feet six; the stump of Nelson's right arm jerking very much like the fin of an agitated fish, as was the habit with him when excited. "You know, Foley," said Nelson, "I have only one eye. I have a right to be blind sometimes." Then, with a flash of grim humour, he lifted the glass to his blind eye, and protested, "I really do not see the signal." But there was little space for a jest in the strain and passion of the great fight, and Nelson summed up and dismissed the incident by repeating: "D— the signal! Keep mine for closer action flying."

Another memorable chance came to Foley four years afterwards, when Nelson, on his way to Trafalgar, offered him the post of captain of the fleet. Only six weeks ahead lay the greatest sea-fight of all history; and Foley, had he accepted that offer, might have walked, instead of Hardy, by Nelson's side on the quarterdeck of the *Victory* on that memorable day, and might have heard, instead of Hardy, that pathetic dying whisper of the great seaman, "Kiss me."

But Foley refused the offer. He was in bad health, and, for some obscure cause, was in a bad temper. Practically he had fought his last fight. He lived for nearly thirty years afterwards; he climbed high on the ladder of promotion, and was commander-in-chief at the Downs, vice-admiral, admiral, commander-in-chief at Portsmouth. But these distinctions, though they added much to his rank, added nothing to his fame. He died in 1833. With a quaint touch of a sailor's imagination, he had preserved for his coffin some oak timbers from his old ship, the *Elephant*—planks from the quarter-deck on which he had walked side by side with Nelson. These became his coffin; and in that shell of timber that had shaken to the roar of the guns at Copenhagen, the famous sailor sleeps in the Garrison chapel at Portsmouth.

Foley, it may be added, was a man of singularly commanding and attractive appearance. He was over six feet in height. His blue eyes had, for a fighter with such a record, an almost amusingly gentle expression. His mouth, with its firm contours, was yet rich in lines of good-humour. He had the face and figure, in a word, which might charm a woman's eye; yet beneath its ease and humour and kindliness lay the strength and sternness of a born leader of men.

CHAPTER XIII

SIR THOMAS MASTERMAN HARDY (1769–1839).

"*Well, Hardy, how goes the battle? How goes the day with us? . . . Kiss me, Hardy.*"—(Nelson's dying words.)

HARDY stands imperishably linked to the memory of Nelson by the pathos of the immortal scene in the cockpit of the *Victory*, and by the half womanly tenderness of the words on Nelson's dying lips which we have quoted. When Hardy was made a baronet, and had to choose a motto for his coat-of-arms, he was urged to take the words, "Anchor, Hardy, anchor," which Nelson spoke to him when lying mortally wounded; and no coat-of-arms, ancient or modern, carries a cluster of syllables round which gather such memories as these three words. With characteristic modesty Hardy refused to appropriate the words as a family motto; but he will be held in unforgetting memory by the whole English-speaking race for the part he fills in the last hour of Nelson's life. As long as the English language is spoken, Nelson's last words will live, and Hardy's name is enshrined for all time in those imperishable syllables.

SIR THOMAS MASTERMAN HARDY, K.C.B.

From an engraving after the portrait by R. EVANS

And of all Nelson's captains and comrades Hardy was best entitled by right of fitness to stand by Nelson's deathbed. Troubridge could not have filled Hardy's place, nor Collingwood, nor Berry, nor Foley, nor Saumarez. Collingwood was never quite at ease with Nelson, and never quite understood him. Troubridge in later years drifted apart from Nelson, and was never quite forgiven for what Nelson looked upon as want of sympathy, and officious intermeddling at the Admiralty Board. Berry was in his place in the mizzen chains of the *San Nunzio*, leading the Victory's boarders; he would have been helpless and clumsy beside Nelson's deathbed. Betwixt Nelson and Saumarez there was a fatal lack of sympathy: Nelson, indeed, never understood Saumarez, and looked on him rather as an ungenial, not to say priggish, critic than as a comrade and a friend. Ball comes nearest to Hardy in the relationship in which he stood to Nelson; yet Ball's predisposition to a wordy philosophy provoked a mood of half-angry banter in Nelson. Hardy alone—grave, sweet-natured, modest, a gallant seaman, a man of sensitive humour who understood Nelson perfectly and worshipped him without flattering him—he beyond all others, was the comrade Nelson would have chosen to hold his hand as he died. Only perhaps to Hardy could Nelson have spoken those pathetic words childlike

in their simplicity and womanly in their depth of feeling, "Kiss me, Hardy."

Sir William Parker, the last of Nelson's captains, once described Hardy as "the very soul of truth." Codrington, keen of eye and speech, who seldom admires any one, has nothing but unreserved eulogy for Hardy. He writes to his wife after Trafalgar: "From the first day that I saw him on board the *Victory* I was captivated by his manner, so unusual and yet so becoming to his situation as confidant to Lord Nelson; and I gave in to the general good opinion of the fleet. He has not beauty, or those accomplishments which attract sometimes on shore above all other qualities; but he is very superior." Hardy certainly had "no beauty." He was tall and massive in figure, a curious contrast in appearance to Nelson, with his little, contorted body. It is argued, indeed, that the sharpshooters in the tops of the *Redoutable* were trying to shoot Hardy rather than Nelson; for no Frenchman, it was reasoned, would have drawn a trigger on the little, insignificant figure walking with jerking steps to and fro on the *Victory's* quarterdeck, when he had the commanding bulk of Hardy, who walked by Nelson's side, to aim at! Hardy's face in Abbott's well-known painting will repay study. The features are large, the cheeks heavy, the eyebrows black and thick. But there is a frankness in the wide-opened

eyes, a kindness in the firm mouth, and an air of sweetness as well as of gravity and strength in the whole countenance, which take the gazer's imagination captive. It is the face of a man with whom nobody would take any liberties; a strong face, with not an ignoble line in it. A certain half-solemn dignity lies upon it; but it is a face which would win a child's affection, and to which a woman would turn for help.

Hardy in a word was, in later years at least, the closest of all Nelson's friends; and Nelson found in him not so much the qualities he himself possessed, but the qualities he most admired. Hardy had not, of course, that incommunicable and undefinable quality in Nelson which we call genius, and which made him the greatest sea-fighter the world has ever known. He was fearless, cool, a fine seaman, unsurpassed in his knowledge of all the details, and his fidelity to all the duties of his profession. But he had no spark of the divine fire in him. Nelson had this; and it made him on sea a figure almost as terrible and commanding as Napoleon was on land. But Hardy had more of equipoise than Nelson; less fretful nerves, a less impatient temper, and a mellow sweetness of disposition which Nelson found inexpressibly soothing.

Hardy's sea career began in a very perplexed fashion. He was entered when twelve years old as

middy on a 14-gun brig, and served on her for about a year. A boyish letter of that period still survives, in which Nelson's future flag-captain announces: "I am now resolved to learn everything as fast as I can." But young Hardy left the brig early in 1782, and became once more a schoolboy; his name, after the curious fashion of that time, being still borne on the books of some ship—the *Seaford* or *Carnatic*. So that for three years, by an official fiction, young Hardy was a middy afloat, while in fact he was a schoolboy ashore. Hardy's earliest captain wrote to his parents: "Thomas is a very good boy, and I think will make a complete seaman one day or other," a prediction which had a happier fortune than most uninspired prophecies, for it came true.

Hardy ended his school career, in boyish fashion, by running away. He shipped on board a West Indiaman and for some unknown period disappeared from human sight, serving before the mast, or in the cook's galley. In 1790, however, he reappears as a middy on board the *Hebe*, and served in a steady but uneventful fashion, till in 1796 he was lieutenant on the *Minerve*, a fine frigate, on which Nelson flew his flag as commodore. At this point begins that memorable friendship which ended nine years afterwards in the cockpit of the *Victory*, and which is Hardy's best title to human memory.

Nelson had another frigate, the *Blanche*, with
m; and two fine frigates under Nelson, in such
sea—the Mediterranean—and at such a time,
ere sure of adventures. On December 19 two
panish frigates were met off Carthagena. The
inerve picked out the largest Spaniard, and after
tough fight of nearly three hours' duration—she
as gallantly fought by a captain who had Stuart
ood in his veins—she surrendered, the other
panish ship beating off her opponent. The
inerve took her capture in tow; but an hour
terwards, and while daybreak was still two hours
stant, a new Spaniard, a heavily-armed frigate,
ppeared on the scene. The *Minerve* cast off her
ize, which was in charge of Hardy, with another
fficer and a small prize crew, and fought her new
ntagonist, and was on the point of capturing it,
hen three Spaniards—one of them a monster of
12 guns—made their appearance with the dawn,
rawn by the sound of the guns; and these were
uickly followed by a fourth enemy. The *Blanche*,
elson's consort, was almost out of sight to wind-
ard; but she fell on one of the Spaniards strag-
ing in the rear, a frigate of about her own size,
mpelled her to strike, but was unable to take
ssession of the prize, as the other Spaniards
ere too near.

Meanwhile the *Minerve*, half crippled by two

fights, and with a prize in tow, was being pursued by a squadron. She must have been captured, and Nelson would have endured—what for him would have been an experience more bitter than death—the ignominy of defeat and the bitterness of surrender, but for a splendid act of chivalry on the part of Hardy and his brother officer in charge of the prize. They deliberately hoisted English colours above the Spanish flag, and that challenge to Spanish pride drew the pursuing ships upon them, and gave the *Minerve* a chance of escape. The little prize crew fought their ship gallantly, but her two remaining masts went by the board, and she struck her flag. But they had saved Nelson!

Nelson was the last man in the world to ever forget a service so gallant and so self-sacrificing, and he soon had the opportunity of repaying it. Hardy was in due course exchanged, and rejoined the *Minerve* at Gibraltar. The *Minerve* on February 11 ran out of Gibraltar, and was instantly pursued by a small squadron of Spanish line-of-battle ships. In the uncertain wind, and under the lee of the high land, the taller masts of the Spaniards gave them the advantage, and the leading ship was fast overtaking the *Minerve*. Just then a sailor fell overboard from the British frigate, and Hardy, always prompt in a generous act, lowered a boat and leapt into it to rescue the drowning man.

The search for him was vain, and the boat turned to pull back to the *Minerve;* but a strong current made her progress slow, and the huge Spanish line-of-battle ship was coming up fast. Nelson looked at the great Spaniard, and then at the *Minerve's* struggling boat. Should he risk the loss of his ship to save his officer? "By G—!" he cried, "I'll not lose Hardy! Back the mizzen-topsail!" The *Minerve* lay-to while the boat crept slowly up; and, curiously enough, the haughty contempt shown by the *Minerve* for her pursuer chilled the ardour of the Spaniard in pursuit. It, too, backed its main-topsail in doubt, and the *Minerve* picked up Hardy and bore him off in triumph.

In May of the same year the *Minerve* (now under Cockburn) and the *Lively* (under Hallowell) discovered a fine French brig of war lying under the walls of Santa Cruz. The boats of the frigate were launched, and, under Hardy's command, made a dash for the Frenchman. It was a desperate adventure. The brig herself carried 16 guns; she was covered by the shore batteries, by the fire of a large ship at anchor near, and by the muskets of a strong body of troops on the beach. Hardy, however, attacked with perfect coolness and skill, carried the brig, and brought her off with a loss of only one man killed and fifteen wounded. The prize was a fast, fine brig of 349 tons, the

Mutine; she was at once added to the British navy, and rendered in after years memorable service. Hardy was placed in command of her. The capture of *La Mutine*, Nelson declared, was "so desperate" an enterprise that Hardy amply deserved his promotion. Thus, when only twenty-eight years of age, Hardy found himself in command of perhaps the finest and fastest brig of war under the British flag, and, what was better still, he had won the notice and admiration of Nelson.

The *Mutine* served as a despatch boat for Nelson when in pursuit of Brueys; and when, after the Nile, Berry was sent home with despatches, Hardy took his place as Nelson's flag-captain in the *Vanguard*, a bit of very splendid promotion. He followed Nelson to the *Foudroyant*, but must have seen little of his admiral, and that little not of a pleasant sort, during the ignoble days when Nelson was falling under the influence of Lady Hamilton and of the Neapolitan court. In 1799 Berry resumed his place as Nelson's flag-captain, and Hardy was transferred to the *Princess Charlotte;* but in 1800 he rejoined Nelson as his flag-captain on the *Namur*, and followed him to the *San Josef* and to the *St. George* in turn. From that time, indeed, the two friends were inseparable. Nelson had found his ideal flag-captain, Hardy his natural leader.

The *St. George* carried Nelson's flag under Hyde Parker in the Baltic expedition, but when Nelson took in his squadron of 74's to attack the Danish batteries at Copenhagen, he had to leave the heavy *St. George* behind him, and hoisted his flag on the *Elephant;* so it is Foley, and not Hardy, who plays a part in the immortal incident when Nelson put his telescope to his blind eye and declared he really could *not* see his admiral's signal of recall! Hardy, however, accompanied Nelson as a volunteer, and rendered characteristically fine service. On the night before the fight he sounded, through the darkness, the passage along which the British ships must come, pushing his soundings with cool daring close up to the floating batteries of the Danes. Had his soundings been followed from the first, as the British ships moved into the fight, the victory won that day would have been achieved earlier, and at vastly smaller cost.

In 1803 Nelson began his memorable blockade of the French in Toulon, and Hardy was his flag-captain, both then and during the memorable pursuit of Villeneuve to the West Indies. When Nelson, on September 14, 1805, embarked at Portsmouth for what was his last cruise and his last battle, Hardy was still his flag-captain, and, in addition, was captain of the fleet. He was, in a

word, Nelson's other self. In less than six weeks came Trafalgar and Nelson's death.

The story of those six weeks lives imperishably, not only in English history, but in the English imagination, and Hardy plays a great part in it. With Blackwood he was a witness to Nelson's last will. He stood by the side of his great admiral as the *Victory*, sorely pelted with shot, drew slowly near the enemy's line. Through what gap in that wall of mighty ships should the *Victory* thrust her stem? The huge *Santissima Trinidada*, gleaming red and white, lifted her four decks like a floating mountain right in their course. The *Bucentaure* followed the *Santissima Trinidada*, and flew the flag of the French commander-in-chief. Then came the *Neptune* and the *Redoutable*. Hardy asked Nelson against which of these ships he should place the *Victory*. "Take your choice, Hardy," was Nelson's reply; "it doesn't signify much." Though neither of the men knew it, on Hardy's choice, in a sense, hung Nelson's fate.

Hardy signed to the helmsman, and the *Victory* moved through the narrow gap astern of the *Bucentaure*, fired one deliberate, long-drawn, and overwhelming broadside into that ship—a blast of fire that practically destroyed her—then, moving forward under a dreadful fire from the *Neptune*, ground her sides against the *Redoutable*. The tops of that

ship were crowded with sharpshooters, and it was the musket of one of these that slew Nelson.

The comradeship of Nelson and Hardy throughout the great fight comes out in moving characters. One of the most gallant of English seamen, Codrington, has told the world how, for brave men, comradeship in danger has an ennobling effect. "There is something very fine," he says, "in the manner of men of courage to each other before going into action, and the memory of this seems almost to repay one for the danger. I can hardly ever think without emotion of the examples of this I have seen." And there is certainly something very fine and elevated in the manner—visible unconsciously through the syllables of the bald tale—of Nelson and Hardy to each other in the fury of the great battle. As the *Victory* drifted slowly into the fight, Nelson and Hardy walked quietly to and fro on the quarterdeck. Their work is practically done; the two fleets are closing on each other; every preparation has been made; every man is at his post; nothing remains but the final argument of the guns, and it is certain that every man will do his duty.

An ordered silence lies on the great ship as she moves slowly onward. Scott, Nelson's secretary, stopped Hardy to speak with him for a moment, and while he was still speaking a French cannon ball strikes him. Nelson hears the sound of his

falling body, and turns. "Is that poor Scott that has gone?" he asks: "poor fellow!" The fallen man is carried below; but on the deck is the red splash of his blood. On that very spot, an hour later, Nelson himself is to fall. Meanwhile Nelson and Hardy have resumed their calm walk to and fro. A shot strikes the fore brace bits of the quarterdeck, and passes betwixt the two friends, a flying splinter from the bits tearing the buckle from Hardy's shoe and bruising his foot. The two men stop and survey each other with questioning looks. Each is eager to find out if the other is wounded. Then Nelson breaks into a smile, and says, "This is too warm work, Hardy, to last long." In that little vignette how much alike of deep friendship and of cool courage—a courage that could smile amid the flying splinters—is visible!

A battle crystallises into strange shapes; and nothing could well be stranger than the aspect the battle took immediately about Nelson. The *Victory* had closed on the *Redoutable*, the *Neptune* on the *Victory*, the *Temeraire* on the *Redoutable*. So here were four ships of the line grinding their sides together, their heads lying in the same direction, and forming almost as compact a tier as if they had been moored together. The pulses of red flame—the flame of heavy guns—throbbed betwixt their hulls beneath, while their masts and

sails above sparkled with musketry fire. Of these four ships the *Redoutable* offered, perhaps, the strangest spectacle. She had shut her lower gun ports hurriedly as the *Victory* closed with her, fearing lest she should be boarded through these by the English; but her tops were crowded with small-arms men, who pelted the deck of the *Victory* with incessant bullets. Below, therefore, the great guns of the *Redoutable* were silent; but a venomous musketry fire crackled tirelessly from her upper deck and her tops.

Nelson and Hardy, through all this hell of fire, were still calmly pacing to and fro on the quarter-deck. The mizzen-top of the *Redoutable* looked right down on them, and was not more than fifteen yards distant. Just as the two friends turned in their walk, a shot from a marksman in the enemy's mizzen struck Nelson on his left shoulder, and tore its way through his chest to the spine. "They have done for me at last, Hardy," said Nelson, as he fell.

There is no need to tell afresh that unforgettable scene in the British flagship's cockpit. Hardy, it must be remembered, was not only captain of the *Victory*, but captain of the fleet. From the moment, indeed, Nelson fell, till the moment when his death was reported to Collingwood, Hardy was in command of the fleet. The condition of the *Victory*

itself called for his utmost exertions. The venomous fire of the French muskets had turned its deck into a charnel house; and, with splendid audacity, the French attempted to carry it by boarding. They saw their enemy's deck before them, almost deserted. Its apparent emptiness tempted them. Some Frenchmen actually clambered up the *Victory's* anchor, and made their appearance above the bulwarks on the forecastle; others tried to creep up the chains; yet others were hurriedly, and with loud outcries, trying to lower the *Redoutable's* main-yard so as to form a bridge to the *Victory's* bulwarks.

A broadside from the *Temeraire* swept these audacious boarders into destruction; but, for a moment, it seemed probable that a desperate hand-to-hand fight would take place on the deck of the *Victory* itself. How profoundly the long and gallant fight of the *Redoutable* impressed Hardy himself is told by what he said to William Parker, the captain of the *Amazon*, afterwards. "Parker," he said, "and you, Capel"—another youthful and ardent frigate-captain—"have often talked of your attacking a French line-of-battle ship with two frigates. Now, after what I have seen at Trafalgar, I am satisfied it would be mere folly, and ought never to succeed." Yet the case of the *Amazon* and the *Indefatigable*, in their long fight with *Les Droits de*

l'Homme, shows that British sailors sometimes accomplished what even Hardy, one of the most gallant examples of the type, held to be impossible!

Hardy, in the stress of the fight, could only visit his dying admiral at intervals. And Nelson's impatience for his friend was constant and distressing: "Will no one bring Hardy to me? He must be killed!" Then, when Hardy came, it is moving to notice how eager interest in the fight and the pathetic sense of quick-coming death struggled together in Nelson. "I am a dead man, Hardy!" follows hard upon the question of "How goes the battle?" "Anchor, Hardy, anchor!" he cries, his seaman's brain forecasting the gathering tempest. Then follows the childlike entreaty, "Don't throw me overboard, Hardy." Last comes that pathetic, "Kiss me, Hardy." And when his friend's lips have touched his cheek, the dying man says: "Now I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done my duty!"

Hardy stands for a moment looking down in heart-broken silence on his dying leader, already in the swoon of death; then he stoops and kisses his friend's forehead. "Who is that?" whispers the dying man, recalled by the touch of Hardy's lips to semi-consciousness. "It is Hardy." "God bless you, Hardy!" and those words are Nelson's farewell.

Hardy lived for more than thirty years afterwards, and he rendered England fine service; but

he saw no more great battles. His future work was rather that of an administrator and a diplomatist than of a fighting man. Nelson's captains in the great war were not, in the modern sense, educated men. At eleven or twelve years of age the middy's berth became their world. They had long cruises and very short holidays ashore. Letters for them were rare; books a luxury; newspapers almost unknown. But their profession trained them: they were constantly wrestling with nature—fighting the sea, battling with the winds, finding their way across the trackless ocean—as well as contending with human enemies. They had to refit, and sometimes almost rebuild, their ships, as well as sail and fight them. The captain of a frigate or of a 74 was practically the ruler of a little kingdom; and he learnt all the arts of government. He knew men. He became, more or less unconsciously, an expert administrator, a diplomatist. And where such a captain was, by gift of nature, quick-minded and reflective, his profession developed in him a power, both of managing affairs and of governing men, of a very high order.

This explains why Troubridge, with no other training than the quarterdeck, proved himself so efficient at Whitehall. Ball, at Malta, showed the same power of governing men of another race which great Indian administrators have displayed.

Saumarez, during the five years he was in command in the Baltic, was more of a diplomatist than a sailor; and he succeeded where many a trained diplomatist would have failed.

And Hardy belonged to the same type as Troubridge, and Ball, and Saumarez. During the five years he held the post of commander-in-chief on the South American station he had a task as difficult as that of Saumarez in the Baltic, and much more perplexed than that of Ball at Malta. The South American republics, with their angry politics and perpetual revolutions, were a human powder-mine. But Hardy had exactly the gifts and the training which qualified him for being the spokesman and representative of England in such a perplexed realm. His character won confidence; his cool temper kept him out of quarrels; his calm judgment carried unrivalled weight; his advice was never obtruded, and it was never suspected, and never ineffective.

And the last stage of Hardy's life was just as beneficently effective. He was governor of Greenwich Hospital, and was the best fitted of all men living to be the head of that great home of battle-scarred veterans. Greenwich Hospital, at the close of a twenty years' war, was choked with the human debris of a hundred great sea-fights; veterans who had fought and suffered for England under every

sky and in every sea; who were tanned by strange suns, and torn by strange wounds, and were half children and half heroes. For this strange flock Hardy was a sort of human providence. He understood them, loved them, was trusted by them. He was jealous of their comfort, and if he ruled them with the discipline of the quarterdeck, he cared for them with something of the regard of a father.

A pillar to the memory of the great sailor who was Nelson's friend stands on the crest of the Black Down, above Portisham, and the passing ships can see it, showing needle-like against the sky. But Hardy himself sleeps where he would have chosen, in the hospital cemetery, sown thick with the dust of English seamen. A monument to his memory stands in the hospital chapel, and his strong, wise, and manly face looks down from the walls of the painted hall at Greenwich. But his best title to a place in the unforgetting memory of all Englishmen is in that "Kiss me, Hardy"; words by which, as with one pathetic whisper, Nelson linked Hardy's name for ever with his own. In Hardy's coffin, it may be added, there lies, by his own dying wish, Nelson's portrait.

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